

THE
TOWER;
OR THE
Romance of Ruthyne.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

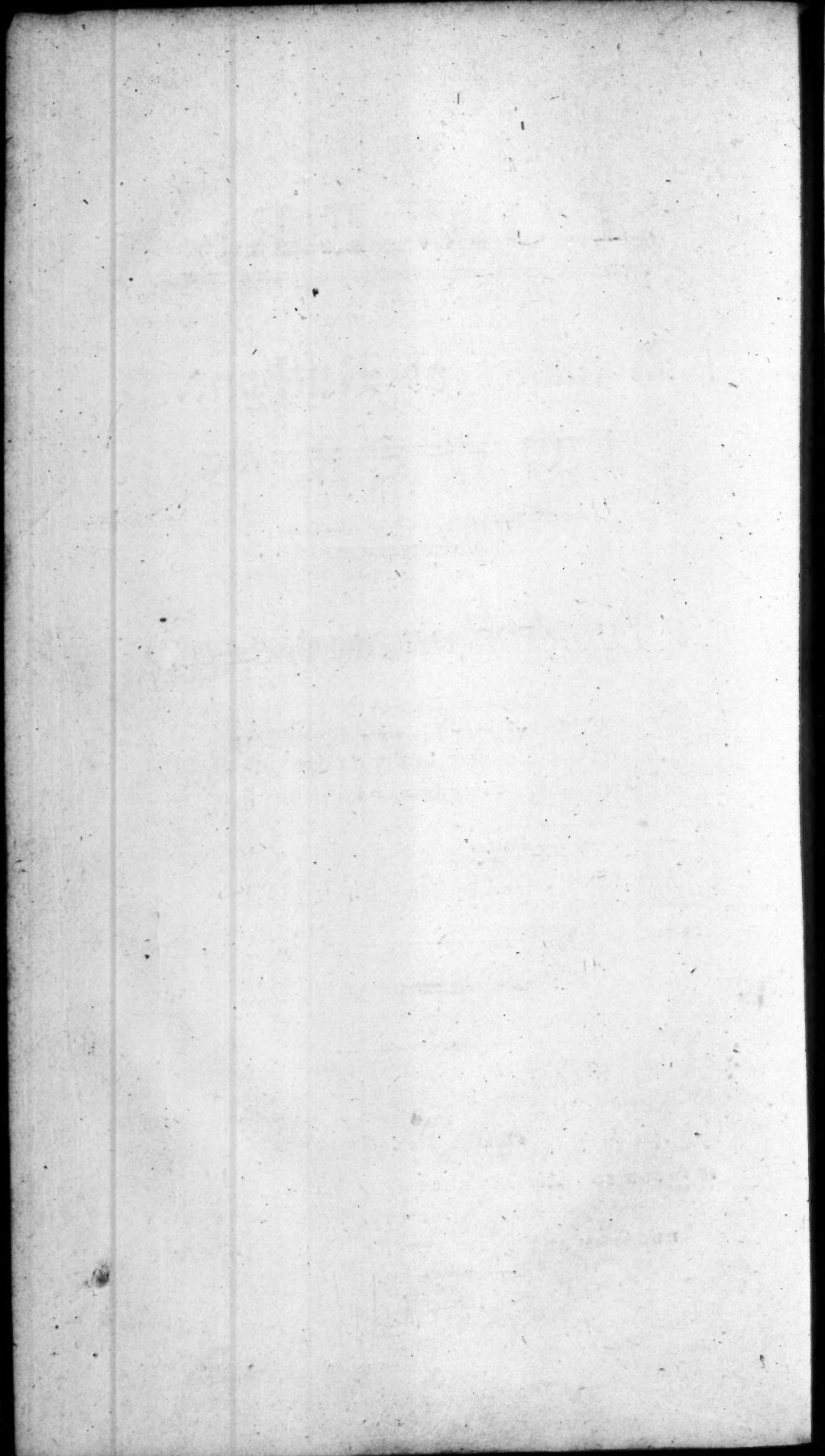
BY THE
AUTHORESS OF MANFREDI.

VOL. III.

Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless extacy.

SHAKESPEARE.

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—
1798



THE
TOWER, &c.

C H A P. I.

We - - - - -
Created with our needles, both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion
Both warbling of one song, both in one key.

And will you rend our ancient love asunder?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE days of Aubincourt were now chiefly spent at the Tower, and a thousand little incidents, soon shewed Matilda, the interest she had in his heart.

VOL. III.

B

She

She would now have called herself happy, but for the shortening letters she received from her sister, who immersed in the whirl of dissipation, seldom said more than that she was well and happy. She was still in Cumberland, but lord Waldemar had proposed shortly removing to London for the winter ; and the promised pleasures of the metropolis, seemed to occupy all Augusta's heart, as well as her cares.

The fierce suns of autumn began to tinge the forest with the richest brown, and the fields of waving corn, diversified every landscape. The rude mirth of the peasantry enlivened the walks of Mrs. Laurie and Matilda, who participated in the general joy of harvest, when they saw the happy countenance of the husbandman, exulting over his golden sheaves, that loaded his carriages, and stored his capacious barns with future plenty.

It was the season too of meditation, as well as delight. The shadowy evenings, not

not unfrequently marked by the quivering lightening or distant thunder, afforded subjects for contemplation, and brought a gentle melancholy that was natural to Matilda, though at this time, chased by the society of her intelligent friends.

It was on such an evening, that Matilda was by accident sitting alone with Aubincourt in the saloon. She had touched her guitar with more than usual pathos, and her voice in the accompaniment, trembled with expression. They were both softened, and Matilda to repress the languor she felt creeping on her, arose to put aside her instrument. At that moment, a letter was brought her, which she eagerly opened, on finding it was from lord Waldemar. But what was her surprise and grief, to learn, that not only herself was almost forgotten by Augusta, but that his lordship, too, was a sufferer.

He begged Matilda would write to her sister, and endeavour to detach her from the

pleasures she followed with an avidity, that destroyed *her* own health as well as *his* peace; and earnestly entreated she would not long delay visiting them, as he hoped her presence might contribute to keep Augusta more at home.

By the date of this letter, Matilda found they were in town, where the folly of her sister was more likely to increase than to subside.

She burst into tears, and putting the letter into the hand of Aubincourt, desired he would advise her how to act.

Her distress had too much effect on him to suffer either a perusal of the letter, or an attempt at consolation; he put it in his pocket, promising to observe her request before he departed, and without exactly knowing what he did, trembling and confusedly declared his affections, which a few hours before he had determined not to do,
till

till he had obtained some slight proof of her regard.

Lord Waldemar's letter, had so far softened Matilda, that she was not in a humour to conceal the sentiments she entertained ; which so unlooked, and almost unhoped for by Aubincourt, elevated him to a rapture she had never before seen him indulge. He had reflected on his age, which was ten years more than Matilda's, and his recent confession of love for Seraphine, which he feared would operate in his disfavour ; but the generous frankness, and unaffected modesty, with which the amiable girl confessed her partiality, raised her in his eyes to little less than a being, the attainment of whose esteem and affection, was the perfection of human happiness.

As soon as she could disengage herself from his ardent protestations of unfeigned admiration and love, she retired to her chamber overwhelmed with the mingled sensations of grief and joy.

She trembled for the fate of the unhappy lord Waldemar and of her misguided sister, but she could not help feeling a conscious sense of rectitude as well in the choice of her friend and lover, as of her situation in life; and a delightful calm stole over her soul, in reflecting that the man to whom she had always looked up as a superior being, was to become her future guide, protector and friend.

At the supper hour, she descended to preside as usual; and Aubincourt, (who was seated by his aunt,) the moment he saw her, started from his seat to lead her to the table.

Mrs. Laurie, who knew how unaccustomed he was to those little attentions, some make the momentous business of their lives, imagined this little gallantry arose from his concern at lord Waldemar's unpleasant letter: the contents of which he had been communicating to her; but Matilda, in whose heart, every word Aubincourt

court had uttered, was deeply engraven, felt it the consequence of her ingenuous avowal, and his own tender happiness.

After supper, it being moon-light, Aubincourt proposed a stroll in the avenue. Mrs. Laurie whose health had lately suffered from a cold, walked a short way, and then declaring herself tired, begged they would proceed without her.

Matilda hesitated, as to obeying her request, till the hand of Aubincourt which had almost unknown to her, grasped one of hers, seemed to reproach her, by suddenly quitting its hold. She turned and began to descant on the beauty of the moon.

" You may admire the moon," said Aubincourt, " but while the idea of Matilda presses on my heart, I have neither eyes or thought for other beauties. Yet think me not of the herd of lovers, who can speak of nothing but their mistress's charms ! I must speak of my own heart ; of its hopes,

its fears ; and, however unfashionable the theme, these, I flatter myself will secure the attention of Matilda."

He then proceeded to speak of her father, and to beg that he might acquaint him with his wishes by the first messenger that came from Arthurine to the Tower. Matilda hesitated at first, but, soon overcome by his arguments, consented.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

When lo ! the death bell smote her ear,
Sad sounding in the gale.

MALLET.

NEVER had the whole life of Matilda presented so blissful a page, as that which for a few weeks after the declaration of Aubincourt, lay open before her.

His taste in painting improved her's ; her works

works became more correct, at the same time more beautiful, and her execution on the lute more excellent, by a desire of pleasing him, for whose sake alone, she thought accomplishments of value; and she found, that however Augusta's taste might lead her to seek happiness in gaiety, the phantom so often and so justly called fleeting, is never more steadily viewed, than in the bosom of retirement, in the pursuit of elegant and useful knowledge.

Aubincourt's impatience for the arrival of a messenger from Arthurine, at length, opened a path for Matilda's anxiety; several weeks had elapsed without any letter or message from thence; and this incertitude respecting the welfare of the family, was at length dreadfully relieved. Lady Arthurine sent a chariot, with a letter, desiring Matilda would instantly set out for her father's seat, as he was not likely to live.

Full of horrid expectation, Matilda delayed

layed not a moment, but throwing herself into the carriage, proceeded with all possible expedition to Arthurine.

The instant she entered the park, that she could catch a glimpse of the house, her worst fears were confirmed: the front windows were all shut up. Overcome with grief, she sunk from the seat, and was carried into the saloon in a state of insensibility.

On recovering, she was conducted to the countess, whom she found in her dressing room, with an appearance of ease, that ill accorded with the feelings of Matilda. Little affection as from her character it might be supposed, she felt for lord Arthurine, his daughter could not have entertained an idea of finding her carelessly thrown on a sofa, reading a trifling novel, without one trace of sorrow in her features, or even concern in her deportment.

Matilda, she received with superlative haughtiness,

haughtiness, and, after slightly enquiring of her health, told her, she had sent for her, that she might be present at the opening of the will. Matilda started.

“ Was there then no hope of my seeing my father alive, when you sent for me madam ? ”

“ Not much,” answered her ladyship (colouring at Matilda’s manner, which was highly indicative of her sense of such cruelty,) “ lord Arthurine requested that he might not be disturbed.”

“ His daughter would not have *disturbed* him,” said Matilda, “ but when does your ladyship expect Augusta.”

“ I have not sent to her ; she, I believe, has no part in the will, therefore need not be present.”

Matilda turned with contempt from the unfeeling woman, and, pleading fatigue, quitted

quitted the room. Meeting one of the servants (whom she recollects to be the housekeeper) in the hall, she begged to be conducted to the room that held the remains of her father.

" You will not, sure, my dear lady," said the good old housekeeper, " you will not go to look at the corpse to-night ! ---you are not well.---Come into my room, and let me get you something comfortable : old Standen has not forgot you nor your sister ; but she, poor dear, is not sent for, as I can learn.---Alack ! my lady, you do look sadly wan ! "

" Never mind," said the weeping Matilda, " I am not ill, my good Standen ; but you shall go with me to see my poor father, and I will take something afterwards."

" Well, my dear lady, I will go with you, if you wish it ; but I am very loath."

" Why, Standen ?"

" Nay,

“ Nay, nothing----I have lived here a long while ;---aye, before your sweet mother died : Heaven rest her----There could not come such another ;---so I said, when I heard my lord was going to be married again----Ah, poor man !---well, he is at rest now---but I believe he did not die easy.”

“ Do you think so, Standen ?”

“ Ah, it is no matter ;---old women are apt to prate----I heard him talk to my lady, before he died, but I must not tell you.”

They now arrived at a door, into which Standen put a key.

“ What !” cried Matilda, “ does no one watch by my poor father’s remains ?”

“ Alas !” cried Standen, with a sigh, “ I motioned for that, but it was rejected, as a useless ceremony.”

Matilda

Matilda was shocked by this neglect, but much more so, when she entered the awful room of death, and saw the traces of horror on the livid features of the corpse, which not even the composure of the last sleep could obliterate.

"What was the conversation you heard, Standen?" said Matilda, wishing to account for the striking cast of the visage, so unlike that her father used to wear.

"Why, I cannot make much of my story," said Standen; "I only heard my lady say, it was done, and could not be undone;---then my lord said, it rendered his death-bed, the bed of remorse and compunction; and I thought he spoke as if it was she who had done it."

"Ah, my poor father!" said Matilda, taking up one of the lifeless hands, and bathing it with her tears, "would thy daughter thus have rendered thee uneasy?"

She

She sunk on her knees, and gazed earnestly at the face of the corpse, then covered her own, and wept, sometimes apostrophising the spirit of her departed father.

Standen, who trembled at her wildness, endeavoured, in vain, to get her out of the room.

"Come, my dear lady," cried she, "you cannot bring your poor father back again, but, I am sure, you will go after him, if you take on at this rate."

Matilda was now quite silent.

"Come," cried Standen, laying her hand softly on her arm, "come, my love, let us go!"

She received no answer; and again took her arm, which, lifting up a little, and letting it go again, fell lifeless by her side.

The

The distress of Standen was now extreme; she was too feeble to raise Matilda, and stood irresolute, whether to call for assistance, or stay till she should revive of herself. Old as she was, and used to occurrences of the same kind, she could not help trembling at the solemn stillness of the chamber, and the awful scene before her. The pale corpse of her master, (with one of its hands clasped in that of the senseless Matilda's,) she could have imagined, would speak, to re-animate his hapless daughter. She moved towards the door, but was unable to take her eyes from the corpse; its countenance was melancholy, and, she thought, reproachful. She again made an effort to go, but the farther she got from the bed, the more awful appeared the scene; and, returning back, she seated herself, and shed some tears.

" My poor Matilda," cried she, throwing her trembling arms around her, " if you are dead, old Standen may as well die too."

She took her head on her bosom, and, gazing at the pale cheek, and half-closed eye, thought the intelligent spirit that used to animate her countenance, fled for ever, ---and again burst into tears.

A solemn silence succeeded, and some time elapsed, in which Matilda did not recover. At length, a female servant passed the door, and seeing it ajar, entered, to know who was there. Standen now, with her assistance, removed Matilda to the room that had been prepared for her, where she recovered from her insensibility, and, for some time, silently wept.

Standen now obliged her to take some refreshment, and amused her with many little anecdotes of what passed during her childhood, and some of her mother, of whom she spoke with an affection bordering on reverence.

"I have lived long in this family," said she, "and every part of it is dear to me.---

I hope

I hope I shall spend the little [remnant of my days in it.]”

“ I will take upon me to answer that you shall,” cried Matilda ; “ but I hope my poor father has not neglected to provide for you.”

“ Would to Heaven,” said Standen, earnestly, “ that I could be as sure he has properly provided for you !”

“ What do you mean, Standen ?”

“ Nay, I must not tell you---But, I wish I had not heard all that I have !”

“ Oh, I had forgotten, Standen ;---tell me what you heard lady Arthurine say to my poor father.”

“ Why, for that matter, my lady did not say much, but my lord wished to see the count De Laffon.”

Matilda started at the name ; the remembrance of that man was horror to her ; but, wishing to know some circumstances Aubincourt had omitted in his recital, she enquired of Standen, if she knew why the count had left the Tower so soon after the death of his lady, and why it had afterwards belonged to the earl, her father ?

" Ah, my lady," cried Standen, " I dare not tell you all that is thought."

" Why not, my good Standen ?"

" Because some of it will be known soon enough, and the rest will only make you melancholy."

" On that head you need not fear me ; and, unless you have particular reasons for keeping it concealed, I should like to know what you mean."

" Why, my lady, as to the first question," said Standen, lowering her voice, " I believe

lieve my lord count could not sleep in the Tower, for they said his lady's father came to him every night, and undrew his bed-curtains."

Matilda shuddered, as she remembered his agitation in the gallery.

" And I have, moreover, heard," continued Standen, " that there was an agreement between my late lord and the count, that the Tower should be the property of the former, as soon as the count Del Fiori was dead."

" Merciful heaven!" cried Matilda, again shuddering, with dreadful surmises.

" You are cold, my dear young lady," said Standen ; " let me go and get some more wood?"

" No, no, Standen, I am not cold. But why have you hesitated telling me this; I see nothing in it relating to me?"

" It does not materially concern you," returned Standen, " nor will it signify, I believe, that my lady is not likely to remain long a widow ! "

" What do you mean Standen ? "

" Nay, perhaps I have now said too much, yet she never was a mother to you ; therefore, her marrying again, will not be of much consequence."

" You must explain yourself, Standen. It is not possible that lady Arthurine could admit the addresses of another, before my poor father was dead ! "

" It is too possible," cried Standen, with a melancholy shake of her head ; " It is too plain to be overlooked ; alas ! who would have thought that the count De Laffon -----"

" The count De Laffon !" exclaimed Matilda.

" Ah

" Ah, yes ! my lady ; it was about eight weeks ago, as near as I can remember, that the count came here seemingly much out of temper ; he went to my poor master in the library, and they were heard to talk very earnestly. Not long after, all the servants remarked that the count was always here, and that he always joined my lady whenever she walked out, which by the bye, was pretty often ; and one of the valets heard a conversation between them, (he was silly enough to repeat it,) which put the matter beyond all doubt."

Matilda made no remarks on Standen's recital ; she was absorbed in thought : a retrospection of all she had ever heard or seen of the count, came across her mind ; and his views in marrying Seraphine,---in his declaration to herself,---and in his present intentions respecting lady Arthurine, were ostensibly on the score of the most detestable avarice.

Standen remained with her till after midnight,

night, and it was not till fatigue and drowsiness made it absolutely necessary, that they separated for the night.

Happily, this weariness prevented the thoughts of Matilda from recurring to her sorrows, and the morning bell, which awoke her, brought a servant with lady Arthurine's request, that she would breakfast with her in her dressing room.

She instantly arose, and repaired thither, where she waited some time before the appearance of the countess ; and that time was spent in tears for her recent loss ; but, however, the idea of her father's dying without her seeing him, frequently occurred, to augment her grief ; the recollection that she never had, by any one action, voluntarily disengaged him, softened the poignancy of the pang she felt, in being deprived of his last blessing.

When lady Arthurine entered the room, she coolly saluted Matilda, and desiring a servant

servant to see if Mr. Allwin was come, seated herself at the breakfast table.

Mr. Allwin joined them in a few minutes, and Matilda found, he was the lawyer appointed to read the will. Few words passed during the repast, and when the table was removed, lady Arthurine going to an escritoire, took from thence a parchment, which she put into the hands of Mr. Allwin.

" As there is no one mentioned" said she, " but you, lady Matilda, my son and myself, (who am sole guardian and executrix to the will,) there is no need of more witnesses; you may begin to read, Mr. Allwin."

Matilda trembled, grew faint, and leaned back in her chair.

" Lady Matilda," said the lawyer, fixing his eye compassionately on her " you look

look very pale ; you are ill, I am afraid ? shall I stop a while ? ”

“ No, no, Mr. Allwin ” returned she, “ pray, proceed.”

He shook his head with a mixture of concern and indignation, as he mentioned the bequest to Matilda, which was but three thousand pounds, with the liberty of residing at the Tower as long as she thought proper.

Augusta was named, as having received a similar sum on her marriage, and the jointure of lady Arthurine was fifteen hundred *per ann.* to be paid out of the Arthurine estate ; which, with the jewels, plate, and other effects, was bequeathed to the present earl, entrusted to the management of Mr. Allwin, during his minority.

The reading was no sooner over, than Matilda, oppressed by a variety of painful sensations,

sensations, begged leave to retire, and sought her chamber.

Recollection, which had been repelled by the drowsiness of the preceding evening, and somewhat delayed by the scene in lady Arthurine's dressing room, now rushed on her with collected force, and threatened to beat down the feeble barriers, her fortitude opposed ; but this storm of grief, lasted not long : her natural strength of mind assisted her in calming her feelings, and in endeavouring to exert the resolution she had often found efficacious, on less trying occasions,

C H A P. III.

Hence horrible shadow ;—unreal
Mockery, hence.

SHAKESPEARE.

MATILDA soon considered she could be no ways an acceptable visitor to lady Arthrine, and determined, after once more visiting the corpse of her lamented father, to depart. She sent for Standen, who, as unwillingly as before, attended her to the chamber ; but Matilda's

Matilda's grief was more settled, more calm, and Standen cautiously avoided mentioning any thing that might shock her. Matilda took her eternal adieu of the sacred remains, and was followed by Standen to her chamber.

"Standen," said she, after having wept for some minutes in silence, "your attachment to my departed parents, makes me anxious to have you about me: should you like to be my housekeeper?"

"Ah, my good young lady," said Standen, doubtfully, "it is my only wish to die in your service; will you suffer me to live with you?"

"The first moment you can receive your dismission from lady Arthurine."

"That I can do immediately. I have long been in the way. I loved my first lady too well, to be pleasing to the second; she will gladly give me my dismission."

"Then

"Then go," cried Matilda "and receive it; you shall return with me to the Tower."

Standen delayed not a moment, but returned instantly, and, with tears of joy, informed Matilda, she should be ready to attend her in a few hours.

Nothing now remained but to request the chariot, and take leave of lady Arthrine; which being done, Matilda, with her faithful and grateful companion, sat out for the Tower.

The recollection of the last time she journeyed that way, pressed heavily on the heart of Matilda; then her father was alive, and though the frown he wore, and the gloomy storm, rendered the journey unpleasant, yet she would have encountered the same frown, the same storm, nay, every calamity, to have had the same companion. The end of the second day, terminated this melancholy journey; the joy of Mrs.

Laurie,

Laurie, on again receiving her friend, could not be repressed by the news of lord Arthurine's death ; but when she saw Matilda pale and sorrowing, she experienced a natural sympathy ; and the earl, however he had been before disliked, was now lamented.

Aubincourt spent the evening with them ; and, as the moon arose, proposed a walk. Matilda, glad to have a few moments to herself, begged he would accompany Mrs. Laurie, and suffer her to retire, as her spirits were oppressed, and her strength almost exhausted ; he saw the emotions that she could not conceal, and, bidding her be calm, and endeavour to take some repose, strayed with his aunt over the lawn.

" I have much curiosity," said Mrs. Laurie, " to see what that chapel contains ; but I am rather afraid I should never have courage to enter it, unless you, my dear Aubincourt, was with me."

" Then

"Then, let us go now," said he "this moon-light will give it, in my eyes, additional interest. Let us enjoy the view."

A large archway, whose gate was thrown back, was the grand entrance of the chapel: it opened to the middle aisle, up which, the moon streaming, rendered it singularly solemn; and the vast retiring arcades of pillars, with the forcible contrast of light and shade, conjured up a sort of religious awe in the bosoms of Mrs. Laurie and Aubincourt, that almost prevented respiration.

"If ever one believed in the dominion of spectres," said Aubincourt, in a restrained tone, "they might most reasonably be supposed to reign at such an hour, and in such a place as this."

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Laurie, "not a word of ghosts; this place is too solemn for such a mention."

They

They were now near the end of the aisle, and stopped to look at the awful obscurity of the farther part of the chapel.

"Your ill-timed remark, Charles, has made me superstitious," said Mrs. Laurie; if I stay here much longer, I shall think I see a figure gliding between the pillars yonder: nay, this is too much; it is not fancy, let us go: what do I see?"

"Do you go, my dear aunt," cried Aubincourt, tremulously, I must stay and see whether we are deceived or not."

There was no time for her to retreat, the moon-beams fell on a dazzling white figure, as it waved up the aisle toward them.

Aubincourt distractedly endeavoured to advance, but suddenly recoiled; he advanced again: the figure shrieked, and fled through the remoter arches. He then staggered to Mrs. Laurie, who was past

the power of speaking or moving, and, seizing her arm, hurried from the chapel.

"Charles!" cried she, when the air had somewhat recovered her, "what have we seen?"

"Do not ask me," returned he, "I have seen *my* death!"

"You look, you speak wildly, Charles; why should this affect *you*?"

"Say not a word, I conjure you, my aunt!"

"Alas! why will you not tell me?---what have we seen?---my conjectures are too horrible to bear; if I may believe the evidence of my senses,---it was---Matilda!"

The name appeared to strike Aubincourt to the heart; he suddenly bid his aunt good

good night, and flew over the lawn with all the appearance of phrenzy.

Mrs. Laurie entered, and threw herself on a seat in the hall, scarcely possessed of reason enough to assist her conjectures, on the events of the few preceding minutes ; but the natural superstition of her character, soon laid hold on this alarming appearance, as the sure and speedy forerunner of Matilda's death ; and, if spirits were only permitted to appear at the moment, when the soul is hovering on the confines of eternity, she might, at that instant, be dying, or even dead.

Unable to bear the surmise, Mrs. Laurie seized a light and ascended the stairs : She listened at Matilda's door ; every thing within was perfectly still, and, when she entered, the silence of death seemed to pervade the gloomy chamber. She now hastily approached the bed, and undrew the curtain : Matilda lay without the smallest appearance of motion, and the paleness

that overspread her countenance, appeared to justify every suspicion.

"Alas!" cried Mrs. Laurie, "she is then dead."

Matilda started at the sound, and, raising herself up, Mrs. Laurie fearfully drew back.

"What is the matter?" cried Matilda.

The sight of Mrs. Laurie, holding the bed-curtain with one hand, and the lamp in the other, whose rays threw stronger expression on her features, (already wild with terror,) prepared her for some extraordinary hearing.

"What is the matter?" repeated she.

"Are you well?" cried Mrs. Laurie.

"Certainly," returned Matilda; "why that question; why all this apparent agitation?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Laurie began to be sensible of her imprudence, in thus alarming her young friend ; and, seating herself by the side of the bed, begged she would be composed, and forgive her intrusion, for which she endeavoured to account ; but her manner still wild, and her words unconnected, impressed Matilda with the most terrible expectations.

“ Where is Aubincourt ? ” cried she.

“ Heaven alone knows,” returned Mrs. Laurie.

“ What do you say ? ” exclaimed Matilda, “ do not keep me in ignorance ; pray tell me all ! ”

“ What is the matter ? ” said Mrs. Laurie, with an unmeaning stare,

“ In pity, tell me, where did you last see Aubincourt.”

" Alas ! I hardly know ; but why do you ask ? "

" I fear," cried Matilda in agony, " I fear, my dear friend, you are not sensible ! "

" Is there any thing so very extraordinary in Aubincourt's leaving me at the hall door ? "

" Is he gone home, then ? "

" Yes, I hope so."

" Thank Heaven."

" Why do you thank Heaven ? "

" Because I hope Aubincourt is safe."

" I hope so too," said Mrs. Laurie rising,
" good night Matilda."

" Stay," cried Matilda " you must not leave

leave me, Mrs. Laurie, I will rise and dress myself. I shall not sleep again."

" So I fear," said Mrs. Laurie.

" What do you mean, my dear friend?"

" Go to the east wing, and you will know."

Mrs. Laurie's looks were unequivocal proofs of a disordered imagination, and Matilda, terrified, began to ring for Martha.

" I tell you," resumed Mrs. Laurie with earnestness, " I tell you it is useless : when once the breath is out of the body, the shrillest sound cannot recall it. Why do you ring?"

" For Martha, to come and help me to dress."

" No hands but mine shall perform that office :---I will put on the last sad garment,

and hide my own heart, at the same time,
beneath it."

" Come, my dear Mrs. Laurie," said Matilda, as Martha entered, " will you suffer me to attend you to your chamber?"

" No, no !" cried Mrs. Laurie, " I cannot rest."

" Will you then go with me, to my dressing-room ?"

" I will go with you any where."

Matilda caught at this pliability, and having seated her on a sofa, sent Martha to call Standen, who came, trembling at the gloom of the apartments she was obliged to cross, before she reached Matilda's.

" My poor master, Heaven rest him," said she, as she entered, " was surely out of his senses, when he sent you here, my lady. I shake every limb of me, when I go about here ;

here ; I shall grow used to it in time ; but what is the matter ? why, you look more pale than ever, my lady ! ”

Matilda soon explained the state of affairs, and engaged Standen’s good offices by a few hints of Mrs. Laurie’s character ; who, after talking somewhat more reasonably, was prevailed on at length, to go to bed.

Standen and Martha watched by her during the night, which Matilda spent in her dressing-room, consulting within herself, how to act respecting her disordered friend ; the cause of whose insanity she believed must be something dreadful.

She waited with impatience for the morning, often visiting Mrs. Laurie’s chamber door, whose wandering senses, she hoped, a little sleep would collect. Nor was she disappointed : on finding she was awake soon after day-break, Matilda ventured to enquire how she had spent the night ? and was answered, “ Very uneasily ;” from which,

which, she knew her senses were returned : but she was distressed to see Mrs. Laurie's usual spirits were fled ; and that her eye, often fixed steadily on her, was never withdrawn without a tear. She feared to urge her on the subject, but determined, when night came, once more to visit the east wing, to see if any clue was to be obtained, that could lead her to the end of this mystery.

Mrs. Laurie continued the whole day in the same melancholy, and retired early to her chamber, declining Martha's offer of watching by her.

Matilda then sent for Standen, and said, she had a desire of seeing some rooms that were not inhabited ; asking her, at the same time, if she would accompany her through them. She knew that Standen could have heard nothing concerning the east wing, and therefore she should have no fears to combat but her own. The good old woman readily followed, and they reached the second

second chamber, without exchanging a word ; here, as they had hurried along, Matilda sat down to rest herself, bidding Standen do the same, who, putting the night lamp she had brought, on the floor, began to remark on the appearance of the room.

" It is a sad old place, my lady," said she ; " do but look, how the boards here are wearing away."

" Do you hear no noise, Standen ?" said Matilda.

" Who, I, my lady ! no, Heaven forbid."

" Listen !" said Matilda, fearfully, " and sure, it comes from that room ?"

" Why, I think I do hear something ; can we open that door, my lady ?"

" No ; that door has not been opened since I have been here. But, hark ! the noise is certainly in that room ?"

It

It kept growing louder, and Standen, catching up the lamp, in the trembling of age and fear, extinguished it. The door of the other chamber now shook violently, and Matilda threw her arms round Standen. Again the door shook, and a blaze of light burst upon them, as it flew open. A person bearing a torch, waved it high above his head, and discovered the features of Aubincourt,

His surprise at finding them there, and in darkness, could but be equalled by their alarm. To his repeated enquiries of the reason, Matilda only uttered the name of Mrs. Laurie. Aubincourt began to fear some dreadful misfortune, till Standen informed him how ill that lady had been, and mentioned, that a desire of seeing these rooms had brought Matilda thither.

"But why chuse this hour?" said he, "and why again visit these chambers, Matilda, when your spirits are so unequal to the task? but, come," added he, taking
her

her arm, “ you have never yet entered this room, which is the last of the suite ; you may now see how it communicates with the chapel !”

“ No,” cried Matilda, “ it is sufficient to satisfy me, that *you* have seen it ; we will return to the body of the Tower.”

“ It might occasion alarm among the servants,” returned Aubincourt, “ were I seen to come with you from this wing : it is late, and I will take my leave. Be assured, an impulse of curiosity alone, induced me to explore these rooms, at such an hour.”

He left them, but his last words were by no means satisfactory to Matilda ; the agitation painted on his face, the trembling earnestness with which he spoke, and the hour at which he chose to visit the chapel, were indubitable proofs that something had occurred ; and Mrs. Laurie’s temporary insanity,

fanity, with her obscure hints of that wing, tended to strengthen her surmises.

She quitted Standen in the gallery, and retired to her chamber: but the idea of Mrs. Laurie and Aubincourt, haunted her, whether sleeping or waking; and the agitation of her mind gave her a slight fever, that increased the weakness of her frame, as well as her depression of spirits.

The next morning, Mrs. Laurie arose early, and entered Matilda's chamber.

"I fear, my dear friend," said she, "you have found me a troublesome guest these two last days; you must not, in future, be alarmed at any little illness I may have. I ought to have warned you of my being often in this way."

But, while she was thus endeavouring to make light of her disorder, Matilda observed, her manner was hardly free from the distraction that had marked it on her first alarm;

alarm ; her eyes were still wild, and her voice tremulous ; and the same livid colour, overspread her countenance.

In hopes, the usual occupations of the day, would in some measure restore serenity to both their minds, Matilda prepared to rise, and determined to think not of her own sorrows, if she could dissipate the uneasiness of Mrs. Laurie ; but, on endeavouring to dress herself, she found her weakness so extreme, that it was judged most prudent for her to remain in her chamber, at least some part of the day.

Every feverish symptom that wavered over her countenance, were so many confirmations of Mrs. Laurie's fears, respecting her approaching dissolution. It was with the greatest difficulty she awaited the next visit of Aubincourt, with whom she immediately consulted on the necessity of sending for a physician.

Matilda

Matilda was then much better, and had taken a short walk.

" I knew not that she was ill, my aunt," said he, " why was I not informed before ?"

" Nay, I do not know that she is what may be called *ill*, but, since the appearance in the chapel, I have every moment expected---I know not what."

" I hope you have not mentioned it to her ?"

" Certainly not."

" Then what do you expect ?"

" Can you ask, my dear Aubincourt ! did ever the form of a person appear, and that person live long after it ?"

Aubincourt evinced some surprise, but soon fell into the deepest thoughtfulness.

Matilda

Matilda entered the room, and as he looked at her pale cheek, he almost believed his aunt's predictions.

"We have been talking of your health, Matilda," said he; "Mrs. Laurie advises, that you have a physician."

"Mrs. Laurie is needlessly alarmed," returned she, with a melancholy smile; "I shall be very well in a few days."

Aubincourt was soon absorbed in thought again, and the subject was dropped.

But Matilda's health, instead of mending, grew daily worse, and her anxious friends again entreated, she would have advice. It was then agreed, that she should accept the earnest invitations of lord Waldemar, and pass a few weeks in Town.

Mrs. Laurie was to spend that time at the villa, and Matilda half promised, to Aubincourt's earnest entreaties, that he

should receive her hand, when the time of mourning for her father was expired.

When every thing was in readiness for her departure, each one seemed to wish it never had been proposed. Aubincourt regretted his present loss, but Mrs. Laurie mournfully foreboded she should never see her again. The pale and languid appearance of Matilda, strengthened the idea of the phantom in the chapel; and when the chaise that contained her young friend, drove off the lawn, she retired to her chamber, and gave herself up to the most violent grief.

C H A P. IV.

Nor looks, nor words, that come not from the heart,
 Can to the heart, with magic softness glide ;
 One simple sound, will sooner shake the soul,
 Than all the varied, studied, unfelt flow
 Of eloquence, with grace and image fraught.

TO Matilda, the journey was long and fatiguing, sinking, as she was, under the pressure of illness ; but the idea of meeting her sister, for whom, notwithstanding her neglect, she retained the most lively affection, gave her sensations, that increased al-

most too much for her strength, when the chaise stopped at lord Waldemar's door.

Augusta flew to embrace her, as she entered the hall.

" You are come in excellent time, my love," cried she, " I hold an assembly to night, and shall introduce you to all my friends."

" Indeed Augusta, you must excuse me ; I am far from being in good spirits, and still farther from health."

" Oh never mind ! introduction will improve your spirits, without injuring your health. Come, let me take you to my companion ; she is a good girl, but such a prude !"

Matilda, who always annexed formality and ill-nature, to her idea of what is called a *prude*, was surprised, at being introduced to a young woman, whose ease and softness, led

led her to imagine she must be a great hypocrite : till the unaffected good-nature that displayed itself on every occasion, convinced her, the mistake was in Augusta's judgment.

" Here, Anna," said lady Waldemar, " you must persuade my sister to be in better spirits, for I cannot lose the pleasure of introducing her this evening ! I will send one of my women to assist you in dressing, Matilda."

" But are you going to leave me already Augusta ?" cried Matilda, " I have much to say to you."

" Oh, I shall see you again at dinner. I must begone now to dress. Adieu, girls."

Matilda could but sigh, as Augusta shut the door ; that the beautiful wild girl, who left her in the Tower, was thus changed. The colour, dissipation had robbed her of, was supplied by a quantity of rouge ; her

dress, equally remote from nature and simplicity, and the easy sprightliness that used to captivate every beholder, was changed into studied looks and speeches, that, though, perhaps, more elegant, were far less delightful.

Lady Waldemar's woman came to help Matilda in dressing; but the gentle miss Morvan, who saw, from the tone of her spirits, that such an assistant could be no ways acceptable, sent her away, and begged to be permitted to supply her place.

" You are too kind, miss Morvan," said Matilda " I am accustomed to dress myself, and need not trouble you, except it be for advice. I am a novice in fashion, and should disgrace my sister, were I left to follow my own taste."

She could not, however, help rejoicing, her mourning forbade her wearing those ornaments, she considered, as rather taking from, than adding to, the beauty or dignity
of

of dress ; and miss Morvan, though moving in the most exalted sphere of fashion, saw, that a plain black robe, could give more elegance to a striking form, than all the paraphernalia of jewels, embroidery, or feathers.

The ladies had hardly arranged their dresses, before lord Waldemar rapped at the door.

“ Do, miss Morvan admit me,” said he,
“ they tell me, Matilda is here.”

He entered, and embraced her, with true brotherly affection.

“ But, why this paleness ?” said he ;
“ where is all your bloom ?”

“ I might ask you the same question.”

“ Ah, Matilda ! your colour fled not, I hope like mine, for *unrequited love*.”

He said this with a smile, but it was so melancholy, that it distressed Matilda beyond measure ; he endeavoured to divert it, by again enquiring the reason of the alteration in her countenance.

" Yet," exclaimed he " notwithstanding all this, I expect you will make dreadful havoc among the hearts, to night ? "

" Oh, fear me not," returned she, with some degree of chearfulness, " my arrows, believe me, my lord, will fall harmless, they have not gold enough to give them proper weight."

After a number of little questions, and a few fly hints concerning Aubincourt's passion, lord Waldemar led Matilda to the dining room, where they found several personages of distinction, whom the gaiety and elegance of lady Waldeimar, constantly drew around her.

The admiration, some of the ladies, at first

first involuntarily entertained for Matilda, seemed to decrease, in proportion as that of the gentlemen grew stronger, but her own thoughts prevented her from particularly observing those about her, which saved her the pain of seeing the satirical looks, some of the females exchanged, as they scrutinized her person, dress, and manners.

In the crowd that began to assemble in the evening, Matilda principally attached herself to miss Morvan ; who heard with amiable pleasure, the frequent exclamations, the beauty and dignity of the charming stranger called forth.

The numerous introductions fatigued and deprived her of all pleasure, while the crowded rooms, and brilliant frivolity of the company, added to her wonder of Augusta's altered taste.

" How is it possible," exclaimed she,
" for my sister to enjoy this giddy life;
accustomed

accustomed as she has been to the peace and silence of Ruthyne?"

"The charm of novelty may be alledged," answered miss Morvan.

"That charm, I should suppose, could exist no longer, as lady Waldemar must have been in this life, ever since her marriage: unless indeed, her country seat affords more quiet than this turbulent region."

Miss Morvan shook her head.

"Ah, lady Matilda, you have not learned, in your seclusion, that if the country affords less company, it has room for a greater variety of amusements; and a spirit so active, as that of lady Waldemar, will not suffer these to pass ungratified."

"It is only, then, at Ruthyne," said Matilda, with a sigh, "that peace is to be found!"

The

The knowledge of Matilda's want of fortune, did not repress the admiration of the male part of the assembly, who (notwithstanding some envious females that were present) openly expressed their adoration of her elegant person, and respect for her more elegant manners ; but those who, through the sanction of lord Waldemar's friendship, had the opportunity of conversing with her, were still more fascinated, by the unaffected strength and polish of her understanding.

She saw but little of Augusta, during the evening ; but, on retiring, was followed by her to a dressing-room, where the sister seemed again resumed, although no arguments could make her believe she was acting wrong ; or, entreaties, promise to alter a single particular of her life, since (as she declared) it was similar to that of every married woman of her acquaintance.

Matilda now foresaw, her stay in London would be very short, as the hours that
were

were kept, would most certainly impair her health, and the gaiety that prevailed, be the very worst means of restoring her spirits, which had not, since the death of her father, recovered their usual tone. She could not, when alone, forbear feeling some bitter sensations, on the reflection of Augusta's gaiety, so soon after the loss of their last parent.

" And would she feel more," said she, " were I also to die? no, certainly. She would be little grieved, and I should soon be forgotten!"

Her sleep was that of weariness, but not such as lessened her fatigue; and when she joined the breakfast party, (which consisted only of lord Waldemar and miss Morvan,) they were justly alarmed at her appearance.

" My dear friend," said she, smiling at their questions and consternation, " you are afraid of a little languor! ---however I may look, I only feel fatigued."

Miss

Miss Morvan shook her head with an air of incredulity, and lord Waldemar began to express serious apprehensions; at which Matilda laughed, and endeavoured to appear cheerful.

The day was spent much like the preceding one, except that the Opera took a part of the evening; after which, Matilda declining the visits her sister was going to pay, returned home, accompanied by lord Waldemar and miss Morvan.

" And now, my friends," cried Matilda, " I shall endeavour to shew you how we spend our hours at Ruthyne: Come, my dear brother, you must ransack your library for our amusement, while miss Morvan and I take our work; and, when you are tired of reading, we will play and sing, to repay you for your trouble."

Lord Waldemar flew to execute her order, and soon returned, with a volume of Thomson.

" We

" We must form our party, and diversify our amusements, till we can attract lady Waldemar," said Matilda ; " if once we can get her within the magic of our circle, we may, perhaps, give her a binding spell."

The few remaining hours of the evening, flew with regretted rapidity ; and the next, no visits, or public places, interrupted the more rational pleasures of the fire-side.--- Books, music, and conversation, filled up the hours, and no space was marked by weariness or disgust.

In a few days, Matilda's health, by the care of her physician, began to mend ; but she saw, with painful anxiety, the spirits of the amiable lord Waldemar decreased, when he found, that even her presence did not, in the least, restrain Augusta's inordinate pursuit of pleasure.

Miss Morvan being, one morning, obliged to execute a commission lady Waldemar

mar had given her, left his lordship and Matilda together.

" My sister," cried he, after a moment's pause, " to you, of all others, I ought not to complain ; yet no one, like you, can feel for my misery---Alas ! why am I forced to tell you, I *am* miserable !"

These complaints, which Matilda had every day expected, were as painfully distressing, as if they had come entirely unawares ; and she could not help shedding tears, at the thought of Augusta's folly.

" Oh, Matilda !" resumed he, " had I chosen thee, instead of thy misguided sister, what exalted happiness might have been mine ! " ---He took her hand, and pressed it to his forehead.

" My dear friend,---my unhappy brother," cried Matilda, weeping, " hope, that time may bring Augusta to a sense of
her

her error :---do not despair ;---you may yet be comfortable."

" Oh, never---never !" exclaimed he ; ---" why was I thus blind ?---happy, happy Aubincourt !"

Fearful, that visitors might surprise them in this agitation, Matilda made another effort to soothe lord Waldemar, and somewhat succeeded, when she promised to go immediately to lady Waldemar, and use her utmost endeavours to convince her of her folly.

She found her at breakfast.

" You are come very seasonably, Matilda," said she, " I am tired of myself, and, I believe, my women are tired of me too ; for I am very much out of temper."

" I may, probably, make you more so," said Matilda, with great gravity.

" Oh,

" Oh, no ;---it is impossible for me to be angry with you ;---but I lost two hundred guineas, last night, at *picquette*, and I really do not know where to look for more."

" A sum very little more than that, Augusta, is to be, in future, my yearly support."

" Can you tell me what I am to do ?" said lady Waldemar, without attending to what her sister had said.

" Indeed I cannot ; but I am come to forewarn you of a much greater loss."

" What can that be ?" said Augusta, rather struck by Matilda's uncommon seriousness.

" That which ought to be dearer to you than all the world, but which, I am sorry to see, you set no value on.---your husband's esteem."

" Ah, my dear," cried the giddy Augusta, " you must not pretend to be my monitress now ;---you know, I live in the world, and you at Ruthyne.---Lord Waldemar cannot complain of me ;---it is impossible I should offend him, I see him so seldom ; and if *that* is his cause, why, I believe, he may think himself well off, , that he has no *other* !"

" You would do well, to reflect, Augusta."

" Oh, dear, I cannot reflect."

" I am sorry for it."

" Why so ?---I really think it saves me a great deal of trouble !"

" Come what, come may,

" Time and the hour runs thro' the roughest day."

" But you, certainly," replied Matilda,
" might often avert the evils you fall into,
by a very little reflection :---let me advise
you,

you, to adopt some method of regaining your lord's affections ;---only a few nights in a month, spent at home, would, I am sure, do much towards it. Let me prevail on you to join our little party this evening. ---There you will find real pleasure."

" To-night I am engaged ; but I will try what I can do to-morrow."

" I shall depend on you then," cried Matilda, rejoiced.

But when the morrow came, Augusta found herself under another indispensible engagement ; and the next was proposed, which passed, like the other, in a routine of visits.

Matilda's patience was at length exhausted ; and, giving up remonstrance, she deliberated on returning to the Tower, since her health was considerably mended ; but lord Waldemar's peace was dear to her, and the only hours of happiness he seemed

to taste, being in their evening's amusements, she was deterred from fixing any time, till a letter arrived from Mrs. Laurie, hinting, that the gloom of the season, without her friend, was almost too powerful for her spirits. She then ventured to mention a time for departing ; but the distress of lord Waldemar induced her to defer it a few weeks longer, which were passed like the others, by lady Waldemar, in crowds and visits, and by her lord, in gloom and despondence.

C H A P. V.

Home, is the resort of Love, of Joy,
Of Peace and Plenty, where
Supporting and supported, polished friends,
And dear relations mingle into bliss.

THOMSON.

MATILDA, perhaps, never felt so forcibly, her love for the Tower, and its romantic scenes, as she now did in the noisy house of her sister, where the hurry of servants, denied an hour's quiet, except when she, who ought to have been the pro-

moter of it, was absent. That dear home, graced as it was by the elegant society of Mrs. Laurie, and enlivened by the tender attentions of Aubincourt, arose in her imagination, constantly contrasted by the turbulent gaiety of her present situation.

" Dear scenes," she would exclaim, " how charming does the retrospect of the hours I have spent in your serenity, appear to me ! "

If she took up her pencil, she almost involuntarily pourtrayed some feature she had remarked in the prospects around Ruthorine, or traced the striking architecture of the chapel wing, whose Gothic frown reminded her of the rooms : in exploring which, she had met such alarm.

She sighed for the walk with her maternal friend, whose animating remarks heightened every beauty, either of landscape or vegetation : nor could she resist the impulse, when she obtained a moment's

ment's quiet, of collecting her thoughts into poetry.

SONNET.

SOFT o'er my mind, in mournful sweetnes, steals,
The dear remembrance of my peaceful Tow'r;
Where, wand'ring oft, when moon-light half reveals
Each varied charm, I've pass'd the tranquil hour.

Sooth'd by sweet Friendship's captivating balm,
How have I rov'd in twilight's deep'ning shade;
While my lov'd lute's romantic tones could calm,
Whene'er Disquiet dar'd my soul invade.

How have I linger'd under forest trees,
Till Night has drawn around her murky veil,
And listen'd to the awful thrilling breeze,
That o'er the branching gloom would gently sail.

While the fantastic forms that flutter'd near,
I've pensive hail'd; nor, trembling, thought of fear.

A month had passed, since Matilda first thought of returning to the Tower, when she received a letter from Aubincourt, who gently complained of her forgotten promises, that she would not make a long visit, and who now urged her to return,

on his aunt's account, whose health began to suffer, as he really believed, for the want of her society.

This request was not to be denied ; and lord Waldemar reluctantly suffered her to depart, but not without declaring, that with her, would go the small remains of his happiness.

Matilda grieved sincerely, not only at his dejection, but at parting with miss Morvan, whose affectionate manners had entirely won her regard, and from whom she requested sometimes to hear, not without a hope, that she might have to relate a change in the giddy lady Waldemar.

Augusta could not part from her sister without emotion, but it was neither violent, or of any long duration ; for her sorrow was forgotten in the evening-party she entertained at her own house, in which were some who had felt the effects of Matilda's charms,

charms, and more sensibly lamented her departure.

Owing to some unavoidable delays on the road, it was late in the night when Matilda arrived in the neighbourhood of Ruthyne. No light was to be discovered at the villa, as she passed it; by which she supposed the inhabitants were retired; and unwilling to disturb them, bade the postillion drive on to the Tower.

It was, perhaps, the darkness of the night and the gloom of the forest, more than any presentiment, that made Matilda shudder, as she approached the gates, which, with the Tower itself, she could but just distinguish, as the carriage entered the lawn. She descended without the court, and, leaving the man to take care of his horses, crossed it alone,

As she was not immediately expected, it was not surprising that every thing about the place was profoundly silent; and, destitute

titute of fear, she stood a moment, to survey the edifice, which was doubly striking, by the darkness and stillness that sighed around it: but, as she looked, her eye caught part of a figure that stole along, beneath the deeper shade of the east wing. It disappeared for a moment, and then was more distinguishable: it was a tall uncouth form, but its exact shape she could not ascertain. At length she lost it, near the chapel; but as the entrance was compleatly shadowed by some overhanging trees, she could not tell whether it went in, or struck among the trees.

Disturbed by this circumstance, she knocked loudly and repeatedly at the hall door, and the sound echoed fullenly through the long passages, but no person answered it. After waiting some time, she recrossed the court, and bade the postillion ring at the gate. He obeyed, and Matilda returned to the entrance of the Tower.

As she listened, she heard a door grate on
its

its hinges ; but it was not, she fancied, one that she had been accustomed to hear ; again it creaked, and the sound struck on her heart : it was the door leading to the chapel, and in the next moment, steps moved across the hall. Matilda was hardly able to support herself, as the door, at which she stood, was unbarred and opened.

" Who's here at this time of night ? " exclaimed the rough voice of Humphry ; but every thing within, was still in total darkness.

" It is me," returned Matilda, " pray, Humphry, let me come in, for I am very cold ! "

She entered, and a dead silence ensued.

" Have you no light ? " said she, " pray get one, Humphry, and send Martha to me ? "

She had found the door of the west parlour,

lour, and was endeavouring to open it, but it was locked.

"Will you send Martha to me?" repeated she.

"There is nobody in the house, but Mary and me."

"Where are all the servants?"

"Some are with Mrs. Laurie, and the rest are in the cottage, on the skirts of the forest."

"What is the meaning of all this?" said Matilda, in consternation, "why have they left the Tower?"

"They are afraid to live in it; they have been much frightened."

Matilda recollected the figure she had seen, and mentioned it to Humphry.

I know

"I know nothing of the matter," returned he, "but things are worse here than ever they were."

He said this in a voice that made Matilda shudder.

"I wish I was well out of the place," muttered he, between his teeth, "there is no knowing what the end of these things may be."

Matilda began to deliberate, where she should pass the night, till Humphry, afraid, perhaps, that she was offended by his speeches, began to say, that he would call Mary, and that she should air her ladyship's bed, and get her some supper.

All the unpleasant things that had passed, or were likely to come, was to be preferred to disturbing the inhabitants at the villa, and taking a bed there. Matilda, therefore, consented that Mary should be called; who, after some time, came, with her

her natural ill humour encreased, by being awaked at such an unseasonable hour.

Matilda begged Humphry to assist the postillion, and to take him to their own apartments, that he might receive some refreshment, and a bed. She then took a light supper, while Mary was preparing her chamber, and soon after retired.

In the morning, the servants were recalled, and notice sent to Mrs. Laurie and Aubincourt, of Matilda's arrival :---the former smiled and wept, as she held her in her arms, while Matilda chid Aubincourt, that he had not sent for her before ; for, from Mrs. Laurie's appearance, she was apprehensive of a decline, unless the approaching spring, and the mild weather, might contribute to her restoration ; but, however willing Matilda might be to encourage hope, she could not avoid mournfully foreboding, the disorder was rooted ; and this damped all the joy she would have felt on returning to the Tower, and being

ing restored to the society of her dearest friends.

Their usual way of life was re-commenced, but Aubincourt, notwithstanding that he was always tender, sometimes suffered a cloud to steal over his chearfulness, that the voice of Matilda alone could dispel ; she (and, perhaps, justly,) attributed it to his fears for his aunt, and when she sung, chose the most exhilarating strains her soft voice could reach.

The hints Standen had given Matilda, on the marriage of the count De Laffon and lady Arthurine, were now confirmed ; the public prints announced it ; and, whatever sensations Matilda might feel on this union, that of contempt was predominant ; but a nearer interest soon occupied her thoughts ; it was, the declaration of Mrs. Laurie's physician, who, to Aubincourt, expressed his fears of her surviving the summer. Her consternation and grief was afterwards doubled, by the receipt of a letter from miss Morvan.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

But ah ! from my affections far remov'd,
The last sad office, strangers may fulfil,
As if I ne'er had been belov'd

SHAW.

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE.

London.

" WE are, dearest Lady Matilda, all in
the greatest confusion ; the storm I have so
long dreaded, has now burst on our devoted
heads, with the most violent fury, and as
cruelly involved me in its worst horrors,
since

since my utmost efforts to calm lady Waldemar are ineffectual. But, to give you an idea of what we are suffering, I must go back to the time when you so unfortunately left us.

" Lord Waldemar has since appeared but seldom, being generally closeted the whole morning, and out from dinner 'till late in the evening. His countenance was always thoughtful, and sometimes gloomy ; but no one, I believe, had the most distant surmise of his intention ; 'till one morning, on entering the hall, I perceived some travelling trunks, and a portmanteau.

" What !" cried I, to a servant, that was passing, what is the meaning of this ?"

" My lord desires to see you in the library, madam," said he, without attending to my question.

" He opened the door, and I saw his lordship in a travelling dress."

" My dear miss Morvan," said he, with the gentleness that always heightened his eminent virtues, " I beg leave to wish you all possible happiness, and request you to tell lady Waldemar, if she has any thing particular to communicate before my departure-----."

" Your departure, my lord !" said I, interrupting him, " I hope you are not going to take a long journey ?"

" It may be years before I return,---I never may return !"

" Oh, my lord, will you consider ?"

" I have considered, too deeply. I am now determined ; will you tell lady Waldemar I await her commands ?"

" I dared not refuse going to her, but was unable to perform the task requested. I only said, his lordship wished to speak with her on a matter of importance. She took
my

my arm, and tripped lightly down stairs, without a thought of what was to follow. Alas ! my heart bled for her

“ The preparations in the hall struck her, but neither that, or even the chariot waiting at the door, gave her an idea of the truth ; its disclosure overcame her, and she fainted in my arms. Lord Waldemar was affected, and I again ventured to plead, but he was not to be moved : embracing her as she lay senseless, he hurried away, for I had no power to detain him.

“ The sound of the chariot-wheels, as they rattled from the door, had nearly reduced me to the situation of the unfortunate lady Waldemar. I was almost distracted. As soon as I could procure assistance for her, I flew to the footmen, conjuring them, as they valued the life of their lady, to follow lord Waldemar and endeavour to bring him back again : but they were more collected than I was, and knew the impossibility of succeeding.

" Hopeless and desponding, I returned to the library, where I found lady Waldemar raving, about following her lord ; and when I begged her to go to her chamber, she entreated me so pathetically to suffer her to set off immediately, that I thought it best to seem to humour her design. She now retired to her room, believing I was busied in giving orders for our expedition ; and she kept so continually questioning me, that I at length found myself obliged to set about in reality, what I had at first only assumed the appearance of doing. I got every thing in readiness, but her repeated faintings have detained us till now, when imagining herself better, she determines on setting out to-morrow morning ; although we have not the slightest clue to guide us to lord Waldemar, except that we imagine he is gone to France, whither we go too.

" I will, in pity to your sensibility, draw a veil over the sufferings of your hapless sister : she is at this moment traversing her dressing-room and cannot be persuaded to
take

take the smalleſt reſoſe. It is near mid-night and we ſet off at ſix. Would to hea-ven you were here, you miſt have ſome influence over lady Waldemar; I have but little.

“ What we ſhall do for a protecſor in France, I am at a loſs to imagine; it is with diſſiculty I have obtained permiſſion to take one footman. Women we ſhall not want; I can attend lady Waldemar myſelf; indeed, ſhe will ſuffer no one elſe to come near her.

“ I have endeavoured to arrange the houſhold, that it may be in ſome little order during our abſence. Heaven knows when it will terminate! I ſhudder when I look forward, and tremble when I think of what is paſt. Fate and miſery ſeem preparing their darkeſt veils for us. Oh, lady Matilda, you will not forget us in your prayers?

“ We ſhall embark from Dover; whence

I will write again ; nay every moment that I can steal, will be employed in giving you accounts. Heaven preserve you, my much respected friend.

ANNA MORVAN."

By the same post, Matilda received a letter from lord Waldemar ; in which, without disclosing his destination, he begged her to forgive the step he had taken : affirming, he had tried every method, tenderness could suggest, to recover the strayed affections of Augusta ; which he had, till very lately, supposed were given to no other, if they were not his.

" But now, my dear Matilda," added he, " I have reason to believe, another possesses the heart, I once so fondly thought all my own. I cannot bear the surmise. A short time will convince me, if she has still the remembrance of having a husband ; and if she has not,---I forget her for ever.

" She

" She will have no reason to complain of her establishment: whether I live or die, it will be equally the same; she may be happy with that, though Waldemar never can, without Augusta."

Matilda derived some little hope, from this letter, that if they should ever meet again, suspicion might be put aside from the bosom of lord Waldemar, when Augusta, more deserving from this severe lesson, would resume her place; but, a thousand fears, respecting the personal safety of the latter, with so feeble a guard as one footman, continually assailed her, and threatened again to undermine her health, which was not perfectly established; but, the united efforts of Mrs. Laurie and Aubincourt, in some measure, kept her from sinking under the oppression of these melancholy events.

In three days, she received another letter.

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE.

Dover.

" We arrived, here last night, my dear lady, and now, with all the anxiety, persons in our situation may be supposed to feel, are waiting for a wind to take us to Calais. We have no tidings of lord Waldemar, who, if he is gone to the Continent, has taken some precaution, that he should not be traced.

" I have persuaded lady Waldemar to sleep: she now conceives herself overtaking his lordship as fast as possible, though Fenton, (our servant) has enquired at every inn in this place, without being able to hear a word concerning him.

" While her ladyship was yet sleeping, I went down to the sea-side, to view what accommodations we were likely to have. I was attended by Fenton, on board the packet we are to sail in, which is a tolerable neat one; but the master assured me, we might think ourselvs fortunate, if we got

got on the sea before night, as he then saw no signs of a wind.

" This delay agonizes me.

" An anxious sailor hung over the sides of the little vessel, and whistled for the wind, with an expression in his countenance, that melted me almost to tears."

" Poor simpleton," I could have exclaimed, " dost thou think, that soft trill will bring the wished-for gale? Ah, what notes will recall our wanderer?

" I returned to the inn, and found lady Waldemar still in a calm sleep. I forebore to awake her, till I had notice to prepare for sea, in an hour's time. I know you will be anxious to hear from us on the other side of the Channel; I will not close my letter till then."

Morning.

Morning.

" Notwithstanding our notice, it was almost dark before we went on board, and, even then, the wind was scarcely high enough for us to perceive the motion of the vessel, though we were on the deck, to avoid the close air of the small cabin.

" It was not a dark night, but the moon was young, and the gentle air was refreshing to our wounded spirits.

" A young man, in a sailors habit, leaned against the mast, at a small distance from us. An universal silence prevailed, till he broke it with a few soft notes, that fascinated my attention. He stopped for a moment, but soon, with the finest voice I ever heard, continued in the following song. He sung it twice, and I recollect, and wrote down the stanzas.

RONDEAU.

RONDEAU.

Sweet as the pensive night, to Nature tir'd,
 Soft as the trembling ray that skims the deep,
 Sweet as the fresh'ning breeze, by tars desir'd,
 Or to the cabin-boy, the bands of sleep.

Rough as the storms that bellow o'er the main,
 Harsh as the winds that drive the sinking bark :
 When dire destruction howls its horrid strain,
 Amid the roar of 'whelming billows dark.

Sweet as the pensive night, to Nature tir'd,
 Rough as the storms that bellow o'er the main,
 So sweet reflection calms my Nature, fir'd,
 When storms like these, my hapless fate distain.

" I was particularly struck with this air ; whether lady Waldemar regarded it, I have no means of judging ; but, a romantic hope of finding this person, our fugitive, or, at least, some one who might succour us in our distress, made me resolve to adopt some method of speaking to, or, at least, seeing more of him ; for the voice assured me, he could not be a common sailor : its pathos appeared to be encreased by the most refined,

fined sensibility, and that sensibility heightened by no common suffering.

" I arose, and took a few turns across the narrow deck ; the same young man was still leaning against the mast, apparently in deep meditation. Seeing no sailors near, I exclaimed, " Is there any one here will take charge of a letter back to Dover for me ? "

" I am not returning to Dover, madam," answered he, after a few moments pause, " but if you will trust your letter to me, I will find one that shall take care of it."

" I promised to give him *this* as soon as it was finished : I was, however, convinced, this was not the voice of lord Waldemar ; as well as that the young man, was not what he appeared to be. The elegance of his person, a jacket and trowsers could not disguise, and the air that he sung, could be nothing less than the effusion of his

own

own heart ;---it was certainly no foreign sorrow.

" The day begins to dawn, and we are now preparing to land ; lady Waldemar is impatient ; adieu, dear lady Matilda, pray for our success.

ANNA MORVAN."

CHAP.

C H A P. VII.

But why that bleeding bosom gor'd,
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?

Pope.

MATILDA harassed on every side, was little inclined to give ear to the absurd fears the servants expressed, yet in spite of herself, the simple narrations of Martha sometimes won her attention, and particularly when she hinted the servants had
separately

separately received a *death-token*, and that all their fears pointed toward Mrs. Laurie. Even the utmost efforts of reason were necessary sometimes to convince Matilda herself, that the noises she heard, and the flitting shadows that in an evening crossed her, were perfectly natural; and that the one proceeded from the different occupations of the domestics: the other from the weakness of her own nerves; but the pressure of melancholy expectation, was hardly to be borne, when she fancied every day, wrought a change in Mrs. Laurie. The beautiful serenity of the country, now that the spring was far advanced, was to Matilda doubly grateful, since her visit to town; but not all the fragrance inhaled from the balmy breezes, the brightning sun-shine, the hilarity of the peasants, or even the opening of her own favourite flowers, could revive the happy chearfulness, Mrs. Laurie once possessed. A heavy languor obscured her fine perceptions, and the damp hand of death seemed to benumb her every faculty: occupation had no charms,

charms, and even the society of Matilda and Aubincourt was less pleasing than formerly.

While Matilda lamented with unceasing grief, this affecting change : the letters of miss Morvan came to augment every pang. The next letter was from Paris.

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE

Paris.

" A variety of distresses have contributed to detain us here, and have again plunged us into the despondency, from which, I vainly hoped, we were emerging.

" I finished my last letter, and carried it to our *fancied incognito*, who, casting his eyes on the direction, seemed agitated by some powerful emotion.

" Are you," cried he at length, " are you, dearest madam, a friend of lady Matilda's ?"

" I an-

" I answered, I had the honour of being called so."

" Happy, enviable title !" exclaimed he, " but,---pardon me, madam, if I am impertinent,---your friend seems in distress;---I may not be what I seem, and shall be but too happy to serve you."

" I hesitated ; such a friend, how much we wanted, for our poor Fenton, though the most faithful fellow in the world, could have done but little for us in case of any distress. I begged the stranger to excuse me a moment, and went to inform lady Waldemar, of what had passed.

" She was loth that any person should have a knowledge of her weakness, but, after a few scruples, she consented, that the *incognito* should be admitted.

" If he knows my sister," said she, " he can be no stranger to me."

The moment he saw her face, he threw himself at her feet, and respectfully took her hand.

"Lady Waldemar," exclaimed he,---"why this distress painted on your countenance?---Where is my friend?---How may I be permitted to serve you?"

"Oh, Mr. Marnonville!" was all she could utter, but, covering her face with a handkerchief, burst into tears.

"He turned to me;”---“Where,” cried he, “is lord Waldemar?”

"Lady Waldemar arose, and left the cabin, waving her hand to prevent my following; I understood her desire, and related to Mr. Marnonville, as concisely as possible, the whole of our unfortunate affair.

"He seemed much hurt."---“But we must land,” cried he, “in a quarter of an hour;

hour;—seek lady Waldemar, and beg her to accept of my protection, till I can put her in that of her lord's."

" She scrupled not, and he conducted us to an inn, whither he had sent to procure rooms for us.

" On our entrance, lady Waldemar desired to have an English newspaper brought, and eagerly ran over the domestic intelligence, to find, if possible, the destination of lord Waldemar; but his departure was not mentioned, and the master of the inn being sent for, he was interrogated as to what English gentlemen had been at his house, within the last three days.

" He mentioned many, and said that " *Mi lor Anglois,*" had been there two days before, but that he immediately proceeded to Paris.

" His description answering that of lord
H 2 Waldemar,

Waldemar, a conveyance was ordered, and having taken a short repast, we sat out.

“ On the road, Mr. Marnonville, (who changed his sailors dress at Calais,) gave us his reasons for quitting England in disguise.

“ And now, lady Matilda, I learned, for the first time, his tender regard for you. Sir Archibald, it seems, had proposed his marriage with a young lady of fortune, and, though not peremptorily insisting on his obedience, mentioned the subject too often for the peace of his son, who, having an inclination to travel, although he had before made the accustomed tour, left his home, *sans ceremonie*; and, taking the disguise of a sailor, to avoid being known by those who might attempt persuading him to return, fortunately embarked in the same vessel with us.

“ It was very late in the night, when we arrived at a capital hotel, and a newspaper

paper was again ordered by lady Waldemar. I observed her eye fixed to a particular part of it, without being alarmed, till, after some time, the paper dropped from her hand, and she struggled with hysterick emotions. I ran to her, and clasped her in my arms, from which, she disengaged herself by a violent effort,---calling on her dying,---her murdered Waldemar. Not knowing how to account for her distraction, I besought Mr. Marnonville to examine the paper, while I endeavoured, without effect, to calm my poor unhappy friend. He had not looked far, before he took up his hat, and ran out of the house.

“ I was now in the most distressing situation that can be imagined ;---your unfortunate sister struggling in my arms, without a person near, who could give assistance. It was long before I could procure any women, and longer before I could get lady Waldemar to bed ; as soon as I had accomplished that, I examined the fatal paper, where the cause of

this distress was comprised in the following words :

“ Two days since, a duel was fought
 “ near this city, by two English noble-
 “ men, lord W-ld-m-r and the earl of
 “ Gr-dn-r, which proved fatal to the
 “ former, who was carried to the hotel
 “ de-----, and expired in a few hours.
 “ The cause of this affair is supposed to
 “ be a certain degree of jealousy, that
 “ existed on the side of the noble lord,
 “ respecting some attentions, too openly
 “ paid to his beautiful lady.”

“ Thus ran the horrible paragraph,
 wounding not only lady Waldemar’s peace,
 but her honour ; whom, the earl alluded to
 is, I can easily guess, but let me entreat
 you lady Matilda to believe, that he was
 never more attentive to lady Waldemar
 than the other gentlemen of her acquaint-
 ance, and that, however, she may have
 been imprudent, she would have shuddered
 at the idea of criminality. No man but
 lord

Lord Waldemar, ever could have power to touch her heart. How this complication of misery will affect her, I tremble to think ; at present she is totally insensible.

" Mr. Marnonville is returned ;---he informs me there must have been some mistake respecting the hotel, for no wounded gentleman had been carried there ; nor could he learn any further particulars of the duel.

" Lady Waldemar has had one lucid interval, and declares she will stay in France, till she can gain further intelligence. I have written to the steward in England, directing him to send me instant intelligence ; till it arrives, I shall entertain hopes.

" I can never do justice to the unwearied assiduity, with which Mr. Marnonville attends to our ease ; to the sympathy he shews in our sorrows, or the means he takes to alleviate them ; but his own ex-

cellent heart is pressed by the hand of grief;---alas! that so elegant, so worthy a man should feel misery!

" It is not very pleasant for us to reside in a hotel;---I wish, since lady Waldemar is determined to remain in France, that we could remove to a more private situation. Mr. Marnonville proposes that we get received for a short time in a neighbouring convent. I know not what to do;---if her ladyship's intervals of reason become more frequent, I think we shall adopt the plan. Adieu lady Matilda.

ANNA MORVAN."

This distressing intelligence was almost too much for the frame of Matilda to sustain, impaired as her health and spirits were, by her constant attention to the declining Mrs. Laurie. Aubincourt, her only consoler, seemed almost as much as herself, devoured by melancholy, and she had no prospect to which she could turn for

for comfort. Her amusements no longer afforded even a temporary relief; her walks were lonely and cheerless, and to add to her distress, the silent cautious steps of the servants, their low whispering; and significant looks were heightened by the gloomy behaviour of Humphry, who, watched by the adventurous David, had been discovered wandering about the Tower at a time of night, when all the family were buried in sleep. His manners, from that time became almost terrific, and, however Matilda might be unwilling to admit suspicion, she could not avoid wishing she had the power of displacing him, which, as he was a servant to the Tower, rather than a domestic of hers, she could not do.

C H A P. VIII.

E'en in the vale, where Wisdom loves to dwell
 With Friendship, Peace, and Contemplation join'd;
 How many, rack'd with honest passions, droop
 In deep retir'd distress! how many, stand
 Around the death-bed of their dearest friends,
 And point the parting anguish!

THOMSON.

THE weather now becoming extremely warm, Mrs Laurie's physician begged Matilda to hold herself prepared for the change it might occasion in her friend's health; and likewise gave the gentlest hints to his patient,

tient, who received them with a smile, and exerted her little remaining strength, in holding frequent conversations with Matilda and Aubincourt, on the awful change she was going to experience.

In these moments, she was always calm, and perfectly satisfied ; but Matilda could not restrain her tears, and Aubincourt would sometimes abruptly leave them, and wander into the forest.

" I know, Matilda," she would say, in these moments, " I knew you will scarcely feel less than my poor Charles, with whom I have lived almost from his infancy ; but reflect, my love, how all my views in this world are fading, and how my imagination now dwells on those of a higher ;---reflect, that earthly enjoyments I am no longer capable of tasting, and that life is thus become a burden to me ; while my ideas of approaching felicity, expanded, in preparation, as I draw nearer my end.---Weep not, Matilda, but let me thank you for the enlivening

enlivening gleams you have bestowed on
the evening of my days ;---for your endear-
ing society, your tender and steady friend-
ship, and, above all, for the happiness you
are about to bestow on my beloved Aubin-
court.---Yes, Matilda, I trust that you
will more than supply my place to him.---
I die happy, in the thought that I leave
him not forlorn, and that you have gained
a protector."

Matilda was reading to her, when the
last awful messenger came ; the beauty of
the morning had tempted Mrs. Laurie to
walk a few steps on the lawn, and, on re-
entering the Tower, she had laid herself
on a sofa, while Matilda read some of the
more sacred parts of Milton. In a pause
of the poetry, she stretched out her arm,
and Matilda thought her face was slightly
convulsed. She arose, and, throwing away
her book, endeavoured to raise her from
the sofa. Again she stretched out her arm,
and laid her hand on Matilda's shoulder ;
again

again her face was convulsed, and, in the next moment, she drew her last breath.

Matilda, without a tear, or even a sigh, held the body in her arms, till the arrival of Aubincourt, to whom, Martha, on understanding the melancholy affair, had immediately sent: he gently forced her from the room, and, on seeing her shed tears, committed her to the care of Martha, while he returned to his departed aunt.

It was not till the last duties were about to be paid, that Matilda left her chamber; then, leaning on the arm of Standen, she followed the lamented remains to the consecrated ground, while the affectionate villagers strewed their flowers, and decorated the grave with chaplets rudely woven, yet offered with sincerely regrateful, and unaffectedly mourning hearts.

All the night, Matilda listened to the moaning wind, every blast of which struck her to the heart.

"Alas!"

" Alas ! " cried she, " *that* now sweeps over the cold bosom of my shrouded friend ; ---shrouded in the grave, and lapt in the cold earth.---That face which used to smile on me with sweet affection, will soon be mingled with dust, and not distinguishable from the parent mold ! "

She wept, till her senses absolutely failed her, and, more than once, she imagined the faded form of Mrs. Laurie stood before her.

This was the tyranny of superstition, and her spirits weakened by the tide of sorrow, unresistingly gave way to her imagination.

The remembrance of Seraphine too, crossed her mind when not immediately thinking of Mrs. Laurie.

" Ah ! " cried she,---" in this Tower ! "

" This very Tower ! " echoed a voice, which to her affrighted fancy seemed close beside her.

" It

"It is even so," cried she, rising to ring for Martha,---"the very walls have power to tell the sights they have witnessed."

Whether it was the imagination of Matilda had deceived her, from its proneness to take every delusion, or whether, the voice had actually met her ear, she feared to remain alone in the gloom of her chamber, and was about to repeat the summons, when Martha entered the room.

"Why do you look so pale, Martha?" said Matilda, steadily regarding her.

"Indeed my lady, I do not know,---but I really am afraid to come all across the hall, and up the stairs, and through the gallery alone. I always think I shall see Mrs. Laurie, or somebody!"

As Martha said this, she gave a fearful glance round the chamber, while Matilda sighed and re-seated herself.

"Who

" Who do you mean, by *somebody* ? " said she.

" Bless me, my lady, there is hardly any telling, but Humphry is so queer, and David has seen such odd things, that ---what is that my lady? ---Oh, nothing but the wind."

" What has David seen? " asked Matilda, whose imagination was affected even to implicit credulity."

" Dear my lady, you will hardly believe me if I tell you, but he told nobody but me, and I promised not to tell again; ---but, it is very different telling you, my lady, and any of the servants? "

" I do not know as to that Martha, but proceed."

" Why, David says, my lady, that as he was coming by the back part of the east wing, he happened to look up at the little turret

turret that has some long holes in it ; I do not know what you call them, my lady ?”

“ I suppose you mean, loop-holes ?”

“ Yes,---loop-holes ;---well, in one of these was a face ;---a face, my lady, and he saw the two eyes, as plain as I see you now, but, it was not a Christian’s face.”

“ What could it be, then, if it was not human ?”

“ I’m sure I do not know, but David, though a stout-hearted lad, was very much frightened ; yet, do you know, my lady, he was so venturesome, he would go and see if any thing was there, and so he came round, and went in the chapel.”

“ The chapel ?” said Matilda.

“ Yes, my lady ;---this turret is a staircase that leads---that leads to them terrible rooms over the chapel :---well, and if you

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will believe it, when he got there, (for he went up the stair-case,) there was nothing at all!"

Matilda was relieved ; she had expected something much more decisive, or terrible, and, promising her narrator she would keep it quite secret, prepared for repose.

Aubincourt was now less frequent in his visits than before ; the delicacy of Matilda's situation demanded this sacrifice ; but, when he did spend a few hours with her, his departed aunt was their constant theme : and, by this gentle participation, each of their sorrows were soothed and alleviated.

But, in the hours she was obliged to spend alone, she felt the Tower more desolate than ever ; and the thoughts of the count Del Fiori---of Seraphine, and Mrs. Laurie, (the former of whom died, perhaps, by some unfair means,) would make her shudder, as she crossed the gloomy apartments, and tremble at the vibration of her own light footsteps, or the uncertain flashes of her feeble taper.

The

The following letter somewhat broke the gloom that surrounded her, but did not dissipate it :

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE.

Convent de St. Laure, Senlis.

" Thank Heaven, my dear friend, we are in comparative peace, within these holy walls, where the indefatigable industry of Mr. Marnonville has placed us ; but the unfortunate lady Waldemar has not yet regained her sensibility. She is as gentle as possible ; her insanity has taken a turn, that melts every heart in tenderness and pity.

" The benevolent sisters assist me with delight, in rendering her every attention : poor Marnonville is too much affected, to be able to see her often.

" She often wanders, with me, in the gloomy wood that surrounds the Convent, and talks in a way that wrings my very

heart-strings. The most sensibility she displays is, when we catch a faint sound of the marten's song, or vespers, which raise her sensatiens (insane as she is) almost to extacy. She sometimes knows whence the harmony proceeds, but oftener imagines it aërial.

“ The river Nonnette winds around the base of the Convent ; on its margin I often walk with lady Waldemar, who sometimes receives a faint impression, by the beauties of this romantic spot, and calls it Ruthyne. The orders of this place are by no means strict, which was its recommendation in the eyes of Mr. Marnonville. Lady Waldemar has assumed the habit.—She looks more like a beautiful spirit, than an inhabitant of this world.

“ We have not yet heard from England. Now that we are stationed, I hope to receive your advice, whether it is not better for us to remain here, till Mr. Marnonville can get some intelligence of lord Walde-
mar ;

mar ; for we yet have our hopes that he is not dead.

“ Adieu, dear lady Matilda.—In the expectation of hearing from you soon, I rest satisfied.

ANNA MORVAN.”

Matilda answered this letter immediately, and begged miss Morvan to remain in France, till she was assured of the life or death of lord Waldemar. She had before dispatched a messenger to London, who returned and informed her, the servants had neither heard of their lord or lady, since the departure of the latter. Thus puzzled in regard to the fate of the former, and dreading a total dereliction of reason in her unfortunate sister, Matilda’s moments passed in unavailing grief ; to which, the recent loss of her elegant friend, gave the greater poignancy.

Amidst all her sorrows, she had still a sensibility of others happiness. She foresaw, or hoped she foresaw, that the gentle virtues, and unassuming beauties of the lovely Anna, might impress Marnonville with a passion as tender as that he once felt for her; and this, joined with the remote possibility of lord Waldemar's being still living, sometimes found its way to cheer her spirits, which, but too often, took the tone of despondence.

¹⁰ Aubincourt's affiduities, too, had their charms; and, feeling she was wrong in delaying what might be happiness, she once more promised him her hand, as soon as lord Waldemar's life or death could be ascertained.

But the measure of her distress was not yet full. At the time she was giving way to the delusions of hope, her peace was again destroyed, by the following letter:

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE

Convent de St. Laure.

" We are undone; our unfortunate lady Waldemar is flown from the Convent. She is but this moment missed. Mr. Marionville is sommoned, and we are going in pursuit of her; all the wood has been searched, to no purpose.

" This blow almost overwhelms me; my head swims, my senses are confounded. Adieu, dear lady Matilda. A chaise is waiting at the Convent gates.

ANNA MORVAN."

Aubincourt accidentally entered, while Matilda was weeping over this fresh proof of Agusta's insanity.

" My Matilda!" cried he, " why this ineffectual sorrow! ---any new calamity?"

She put the letter into his hand.

" Console yourself," said he, when he

had read it, “ doubt not, but their pursuit will be successful : they have, most probably, overtaken the lovely fugitive before now. Come,” (added he) taking her hand, “ let us walk ; do not thus distress me.”

She smiled on him with grateful tenderness, and, putting her arm within his, strolled with him over the level green, before the Tower. Each absorbed by different reflections, they approached nearer the chapel than they were generally accustomed to do.

The sun was tinting with its latest rays, the heights of the grey turrets, and the last sighs of evening were whispering through the battlements : amid this soft murmuring, Matilda thought she distinguished something uncommon, and, stopping once or twice, bade Aubincourt listen.

“ I hear nothing,” said he, and was

was walking away, but Matilda again stopped.

" I am sure," cried she, " I hear more than the wind : the sound proceeds from the chapel."

" Some birds have taken refuge there, and now alarm you with their noise."

" Hark !" cried Matilda. A faint, but distinct scream, floated on the echo of the building. Aubincourt turned away, and appeared much agitated.

" What is all this?" cried Matilda fearfully, " what am I to believe ?"

" I know not," returned Aubincourt, solemnly ; " it is past belief,---nay---it may be beyond humanity !"

" Indeed !" cried Matilda, not perfectly comprehending him.

" So

" So many things," resumed Aubincourt, " conspire to assure me, all is not within the reach of human conception, in the confines of that place. Let us go, Matilda?"

As they turned from the chapel, a louder shriek issued thence ; Aubincourt hesitated a moment, and then rushed in the broken door-way ; Matilda, not daring to stay behind alone, reluctantly followed. All was still on their entrance, save that the solitary bat flitted between the pillars.

Aubincourt advanced ; Matilda still followed. The profound silence, and lofty spaciousness of the chapel, in their state of listening suspense, was dreadful : Aubincourt turned to leave it, when a noise of hurrying, though light steps, broke on the solemnity ; an elegant female figure rushed from an arch, and threw herself at Aubincourt's feet, apparently in speechless agony. He retreated a few steps, and leaned

ed

ed against a pillar ; she then turned to Matilda, and broke the awful silence.

“ Oh, will you not save me ? ” cried she, “ I have done nothing that deserves death ! ”

Aubincourt now started, as if from a dream, and, raising her from the ground, exclaimed,

“ What art thou ? what canst thou be, but Seraphine ! ”

Matilda, at first, doubted her senses, but, in a moment, the flash of conviction almost overcame her, and she retired farther among the pillars, that she might not betray her feelings. Scarcely knowing whether she was going, and blinded, as well by her tears, as the surrounding gloom, she soon felt herself roughly seized, and, in the next moment, saw a man’s arm, glittering with a dagger, over her shoulder. Her screams ran among the arches with frightful reverberation :

tation : the ruffian was dragging her to a more remote part of the chapel, and she believed her fate to be inevitable, till she heard the voice of Aubincourt. The man instantly let go his hold, and she dropped senseless on the pavement.

On recovering, she found herself tenderly supported by Aubincourt ; and Seraphine, whom she hardly yet believed mortal, was bending over her, with looks that might have characterized a ministering angel. The man who had seized her lay on the pavement, groaning with agony, and all the servants were fearfully crowding round.

Aubincourt's looks were wild, and his gesture distracted : his face was black with the agitation he had undergone ; all the fire of his character was roused, and every feeling touched by wonder, fear, and rage ; ---his wonder at the existence of Seraphine, ---his fears, his agonizing fears for the life of Matilda, and his rage at the ruffian, who now appeared to be dying.

“ Wretch !”

" Wretch ! " cried Aubincourt, turning to him, " well may thy crimes now strike on thy guilty heart, and double in anguish the pangs of death ! "

Matilda cast her eyes on the distorted face, as one of the servants held a lamp near it, and exclaimed with horror, " The count De Laffon ! "

" And is it not just," cried Aubincourt, " that you should receive your punishment from my hand ? --- me, whom you basely robbed of my treasure, you have thus basely cast away ! --- Inhuman monster ! and wouldst thou have torn my heart a second time ? "

He struggled for utterance ; --- his emotions overpowered his speech : --- striking his forehead, he seized the arms of Seraphine and Matilda, and hurried them from this dreadful scene of misery and guilt.

C H A P. IX.

Why do I put up that womanly defence,
To say, I have done no ill ?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE moment they entered the hall,
Matilda embraced the countess, and saluted
her as a dear relation.

“ Ah ! ” cried the amiable Seraphine,
“ how have I languished to assert my affi-
nity

nity to you ;---even at the time I was obliged to make you believe I was a supernatural being, how has my heart flown toward you, as the only one who could soften my rigorous destiny !”

“ Ah, why,” cried Matilda, “ have you not before discovered yourself ?”

“ Because instant death would have been my portion, if it had been known, before I could procure a safe asylum : but there are more weighty reasons. I owe my present danger to a groundless surmise, that you were acquainted with my existence. The count (I cannot call him my husband) instantly meditated my death, from which, the generous Aubincourt has, a second time, delivered me.”

To avoid the acknowledgments that were following, from both Seraphine and Matilda, Aubincourt went again to the chapel, to enquire after the dying count; and found, from the servants, who were rushing

ing from the door, that he had just expired.

It appeared to him, that, in the darkness of the evening, the wretched assassin had mistaken Matilda for the countess; and he shuddered when he reflected, how few moments might have seen his dagger in her heart. He foresaw, too, that it would be necessary to clear himself from the odium of the murder; and, ordering proper care to be taken of the remains, he bade adieu to his fair friends, and sought refuge at court, where, obtaining an audience, he cleared himself, and procured a formal restitution of Seraphine's rights, as the legal countess De Laffon.

While he was gone, Seraphine and Matilda related to each other their several adventures; the latter suppressing in hers, the parts relative to Aubincourt; nor, till this time, did she learn, how dear he had been to the countess.

It

It appeared, that the joy of the count Del Fiori, on again receiving his daughter, prevented any disgust he might otherwise have felt at her hasty marriage, till she unfortunately explained to him, in private, what had passed. He soon found out the whole affair; not only the views of that union, but the writer of the fatal billet, that laid the foundation of so much misery. It was lord Arthurine,---who, anxious to repair the estate which had been almost sunk in dissipation, sought thus to secure to himself the count's wealth. It was evident, also, that on finding that plan frustrated, he had entered into an agreement with De Laffon, that a part of whatever was left by the count Del Fiori, on his death, should become his.

The deceived, wretched count, could not help reproaching De Laffon, for the infamous part he had acted, in concert with his treacherous nephew. It was to this, perhaps, Seraphine owed the death of her father. The poor count died suddenly,

and Seraphine had, in addition to her sorrows, the belief that it was by poison. So much did she conceive herself friendless, that she could not consent to the entombment of her father ; his remains were enclosed in lead, and placed in a chamber in the east wing, where, perhaps, the most luxurious hours she spent was, weeping by the body.

Soon after this melancholy event, an entire revolution took place in the household ; all the servants being discharged, (except Seraphine's attendant,) and only two hired in their stead, whose very looks made the unfortunate countess shudder with a fearful presentment of impending evil. The count graduated from coldness to unkindness,---from unkindness to cruelty ; and his hapless victim was soon treated with a degree of inhumanity, that made her fear for her life.

A confinement to her chamber was followed by a separation from her faithful woman ;

man ; and then she first began to feel all the horrors of her destiny.

Aubincourt,—the generous, elegant Aubincourt, was all her soul could turn to for relief ; in reflecting on him, she sometimes soared above misery ; but this was a pleasure of which time soon robbed her, and an old Citra, that, as a great indulgence, was left in her chamber, took the place of his idea. The hours not devoted to music, were spent in meditations, and that delightful communication, sensibility holds with the beneficent Deity, was her only support ; the lessons she had received from her sainted father, were now heightened and improved, and deprived of all earthly converse, she seemed to feel herself more immediately in the Divine presence, that sustained, comforted, and relieved her.

Writing materials, too, were allowed her, and she could sometime compose her mind in hymns, which she sung to the wild tones of her old instrument.

Several years wore away in this manner, during which, she seldom saw the count, who, to all her questions, used to oppose a profound silence. One night, an unusual noise alarmed her; the door of her chamber opened, and the inhuman man entered with a naked sword. He appeared agitated, and, laying down the weapon, broke the stern silence he had so long observed.

" Seraphine," cried he, " you cannot be ignorant that a husband has the power of disposing his wife as shall best suit his will."

" I am an unhappy instance of the truth of your remark, my lord," returned she, meekly bowing.

" You are then indebted to my clemency, for these years of existence, when, though much contrary to my interest, I have forebore to take the life, that, by the laws of creation, is mine when I chuse."

" Oh

" Oh, say not so !" exclaimed Seraphine, " my life is not your's, but the God's that gave it ; you cannot take it away ? "

His countenance expressed all the dark ferocity of his nature, as he replied, I know that I have a right whenever you become troublesome, to remove you ; that time is arrived, you are in my way ; a youthful,--- a beautious bride awaits me : you must be removed." As he said this, however, his voice faltered ; he seemed struck with the atrocity of the deed he meditated.

" I have suffered you," he continued, " to live thus long to be my torment ; why would you wish to make me miserable ; your years may not be many, why should you object to their being shortened ? "

Seraphine, though horror-struck with the idea of immediate death, could but look with surprise on the wretch, who could ask her to make so great a sacrifice for his

sake, after all the suffering he had given her.

Unable to bear the silence that ensued, the count arose, and paced the chamber : he had given death to the man who upbraided him, without remorse ; but his innocent, beautiful wife, who seemed to await the blow with patience, he could not look upon under his diabolical determination, without severe compunction.

At length he stepped to the door,
“ Come in,” cried he, “ she submits.”

A man entered, at whose countenance, the wretched Seraphine in-voluntarily shrieked.

“ You said, my lord,” cried the wretch, “ that she submitted ; that scream is not a sign of it.”

“ Seraphine,” said the count, approaching

ing her, “ it is useless repining, your time is come.”

She threw herself on her knees, and besought him to spare her. The man, whose uncouth form hid a heart, the all-seducing outside of the count could not boast, began to be moved by her petitions, and joined her in supplication.

“ I tell you Humphry,” cried the count, “ she must be put out of the way.”

Humphry then took his arm, and led him from the chamber, saying he had something to communicate ; and Seraphine, thus for a moment respited, sought to allay her fears in prayer, by which she gained fortitude and composure.

In less than an hour they both returned ; the count now proposed an oath, horrid in its form, and binding in its observance ; that, on condition of her life’s being spared,

she should implicitly submit to his commands: it was accepted by Seraphine, though not without shuddering, and she was then taken by the arms, and led through the east wing, to a stair-case that communicated with the chapel. On descending, she was led to a trap door, artfully concealed from all but those who knew its secrets; it opened, and disclosed another stair-case, composed of stone; and she was led into vaults, whose dreariness, as they were a refuge from death, did not impress her even with dislike.

"These," cried the count, "are to be your future apartments; now, Seraphine, remember your oath, and listen. You shall be allowed the comforts of a light, and of sometimes going into the open air; but you never may discover yourself, under pain of instant death, beside the breach of your promise. Humphry is to be your guardian, and, at the hours he thinks proper, you may emerge from your prison, into the chapel: and should you even be seen,

seen, you know the superstition of the Welch peasantry, and will not fail to turn it to your account: no chance of escape remains for you, and your oath should teach you not to think of it."

With these words he departed, and Humphry, after informing her, the reason of her confinement was, the expected inhabitation of the Tower, left her to prepare those conveniences his own humanity, rather than that of the count, allowed her.

But, though Humphry was humane in a small degree, his self-love soon overcame it; for, from the frequent walks of the countess, (who began to watch for a glimpse of Matilda,) he feared a discovery would be inevitable; and, well knowing what he might suffer, if facts were brought to light, he wrote to the count, complaining, that he could not answer for the consequences of Seraphine's liberty. This happened soon after the count's marriage

to

to lady Arthurine ; and, fired with rage, as well as instigated by the most powerful fears, he immediately set off for the Tower, and, arriving about evening, found the countess absent.

The whole of Humphry's representations now rushed on his mind, and, thrown off his guard, he was on the point of seeking her, as she (hurried by the approach of Aubincourt and Matilda) rushed into the chapel. She instantly knew him, on his seizing her, and, uttering a scream, broke from him. Again he caught her, and she again escaped, while he was endeavouring to extricate his poniard from a part of his dress ; at that moment she encountered her friends, and in the next, the guilty count his deserved death.

C H A P. X.

Oh ! knew ye but his happiness ! of men
 The happiest he ! who, far from public rage,
 Deep in the vale, with a choice few retir'd,
 Drinks the pure pleasures of the rural life.

THOMSON.

THE estates of De Laffon now became Seraphine's, by hereditary right, since most of them were left her by her father, and no relation of the count's appeared to claim the others ; for the *soi disant* widow immediately withdrew, with her son, to the Continent,

Continent, there intending to remain, till the noise of this extraordinary affair should be over.—Humphry and his wife, also, disappeared, and never more were heard of.

It was before Matilda could collect her scattered thoughts, she received another letter from miss Morvan.

" TO LADY MATILDA COURCE.

Meaux.

" We are quite unsuccessful in the pursuit of our unfortunate friend, but we have found one fugitive, who will, we hope, procure the discovery of the other.

" Mr. Marnonville and I sat out, attended by our faithful Fenton, and reached a village, three leagues from this place, just as the sun was about to set. While our horses were changing, and the postillion taking refreshment, Mr. Marnonville proposed walking to a cluster of ruins, remains of a magnificent château, that once diffused

diffused plenty over this now poor and thinly inhabited hamlet.

" If we had time," cried I, as I ascended a steep, to get a better view of the ruined fragments, " I should like to sketch some of the most striking parts of this fabric."

" There seems to be a person," said Marnønville, " who has anticipated your design."

" I looked toward the place to which he pointed, and saw a man in a very plain dress, leaning against a broken pillar, with tablets in his hand ; but he seemed more in meditation than employment.

" Does that air correspond with the habit?" cried I,---" surely not!"

" We advanced, without meaning to interrupt him ; but he raised his head :--- you will know what we felt, when I say that we saw lord Waldemar.

" He

“ He threw away his tablets, ran to us, and embraced us alternately.—We all wept; and he soon found, that sorrow bore its part in our tears.

“ Alas !” cried he, “ I dare not ask after my Augusta.”

“ Marnonville ventured, by degrees, to acquaint him with the truth. He bore it with apparent fortitude, but, I am sure, his very soul was rent.

“ He conducted us to a room within the ruins, which, he informed us, had been his residence ever since he left England. I mentioned the duel, but he knew nothing of it: either different persons, or a malicious fabrication, causes all the misery we now feel, the dreadful uncertainty of the fate of lady Waldemar.

“ We removed, that night, to the place from whence I date. Persons have been dispatched different ways, to gain intelligence

gence of our fair fugitive, who are to meet at an appointed hotel in Paris, and there to leave their separate accounts ; and, if all pursuit is ineffectual, we return to England, with a faint hope, that she may be arrived there before us.

" We are in health, but dreadfully out of spirits. This meeting, which, but five days ago, would have been the height of happiness, now loses its value, by the loss of lady Waldemar. Adieu, dear madam : we are on the point of setting off for Paris.

ANNA MORVAN."

A something like hope darted across the mind of Matilda, as she read this letter : but her own sorrows soon weakened, though they did not destroy this transient gleam. Aubincourt was returned, and must be yielded to Seraphine. She took the first opportunity of convincing him,

she

she renounced all claim to his affection, and begged he would reward the high virtues of the countess, by making her an offer of his hand and heart.

Aubincourt had imagined, his love and admiration of Matilda could not be increased, but he found, that this proof of her virtue and fortitude, taught him, more than ever, what it was to lose her, but as he accused himself of a part of Seraphine's sufferings, so he thought himself bound to atone for it, if she still retained that tender esteem he once believed she felt.

At the time that Aubincourt alarmed Matilda and Standen, he was searching for Seraphine, whom he had previously seen in the chapel, but, not being able to discover the least trace of any human being, he was compelled to believe, that nothing less than a supernatural one had deceived his eyes. He therefore resigned himself again, to the soft pleasure of loving Matilda, whom he had hoped soon to call his own,

own, when this unexpected occurrence bade him relinquish her for ever.

It was not in his power to hide from her the anguish he felt, and his admiration was yet increased, by her efforts to soothe him.

" Do not think of my sorrow," said she, " remember I must be happy in seeing you perform your duty ; but you will make me miserable, if you thus give way to despondence."

At that moment the countess entered the room. Aubincourt endeavoured to command his feelings, and Matilda retired to acquire strength, in the solitude of her chamber.

On her descending, she found Aubincourt still the same, and the countess, whatever might have been the subject of their conversation, was unusually fluttered ; for the calm that years of confinement had taught her, did not easily give way to cir-

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cumstances, and this little trembling was certainly occasioned by something interesting. She retired immediately after supper, and Aubincourt cautiously avoided all mention of what had passed. When he departed, Matilda, notwithstanding her resolution, could not repress some hysterick tears, that arose, when she considered all her promised felicity thus blasted for ever.

The countess met Matilda at breakfast with altered looks, but her behaviour was the same, except that a peculiar tenderness marked her tone, whenever she pointedly addressed her. Matilda was herself, and the hour passed comfortably, but each contrived, under different pretences, to separate very soon.

In the evening, Matilda, crossing the hall toward the stair-case, immagined she saw a something very dark, stationed near the balustrade. Not yet entirely free from a few shades of superstition, that (notwithstanding Seraphine's existence, had taken away

away every idea of the Tower's being haunted) yet remained on her mind, she retreated to the parlour, and ordered a servant to light the hall lamp. That being done, she adventured again. The appearance, whatever it had been, was gone ; and she had almost reached the staircase, when something tripped across the pavement, and touched her softly on the shoulder. She screamed, but dared not look round, till a voice (whose feebleness gave her some courage) exclaimed, "I will not hurt you," when she cast a shuddering glance on a figure compleatly black.

" What are you ?" cried she, fearfully.

" Alas ! do you not know me ?---No, ---I am not known.---I am forgotten ;---would I could forget myself !"

The voice could not fail to strike Matilda : she again screamed, as the figure threw off a veil that had entirely enveloped

it, and discovered the emaciated form, and woe-worn features, of lady Waldemar.

Matilda would have embraced her, but she shrunk back.

" Do not touch me," cried she, wildly, I have killed my husband, and I am come here to seek his ghost."

She turned round, and, pointing to a dark passage that appeared through the pillars, again exclaimed--" Hush !---he will come presently---that is the way."

" My dear Augusta," cried Matilda, weeping, " do you not know me ?"

" Oh yes, extremely well ; you persuaded me not to murder my Henry :---you know I would not take your advice ; I repent now,---but no matter :---it will be all well presently. But, who are you ? did you not come to me, one night, at the Convent ? yes, yes ;---I remember now ; you told

told me I never should be happy till I had found my Waldemar ; Alas ! I knew that before :---but where shall I seek him ?--- You told me," added she, drawing nearer, and speaking low,---" You told me, in the grave.--- You will not forget ?---adieu."

She was hurrying away, but Matilda caught her arm, and, screaming louder than before, brought Standen to her assistance. The poor old servant turned pale on seeing her favourite Augusta in the dreadful guise of insanity, and, with difficulty, helped Matilda with her to the west parlour.

Augusta, as soon as shew as seated, began to talk to the weeping Matilda, without her former wildness, though still with the same incoherent lamentations. The countess, who had been walking, came in most opportunely, and, with great presence of mind, assisted Standen in calming both the unhappy sisters. Augusta soon ceased to speak, and, leaning her head on the back of a chair, remained perfectly still.

The night was advancing, and the evening air swelled into a wind ; it sometimes seemed to bring voices with it, but Matilda trusted not the evidence of her ears, and Seraphine equally thought it might be an illusion.

" Yet surely," cried she, in an interval of the breeze,---surely I hear a carriage ? ---Who can be coming at this late hour ? "

Matilda arose, and went to the window ; but it was almost dark, and only the tops of the trees fullenly waving in the wind, could be distinguished ; the noise they made swelled again with the blast, and all other sounds were, for a few minutes, drowned.

" It must be some peasants," said Matilda ; " we are never disturbed by such late visitors ? "

She had scarcely uttered this, before voices sounded more distinctly, and in the next

next moment the bell at the gate was violently rung.

“ Holy Maria !” cried the countess,
“ what can this mean ?”

The servants were summoned, and Matilda, begging Seraphine and Standen to watch her sister, went into the hall, to receive her visitors.

A gentleman first rushed in, and threw himself on a seat without speaking. Matilda saw no more ;---she ran to him,---hung over him with tears, and took his hand.

“ My Brother !” cried she---“ my dear lord Waldemar, compose yourself. I know all that you feel on again entering this place; be calm; endeavour to hope---”

“ Hope !” cried he, “ alas, Matilda, it is impossible.”

L 4

“ Why

" Why should it be?" returned she,
" you may yet regain your Augusta?"

He shook his head, but was unable to speak. Mr. Marnonville and miss Morvan looked silently on.

" Come," said Matilda, " let me conduct you to another room." (She took miss Morvan's hand, and pressed it to her heart, but she kept her eyes fixed on the unhappy Waldemar.)

" No," cried he " I must remain here; ---here, where I first saw my Augusta. Augusta! Oh, Augusta! lost, injured angel!"

" He calls me!" exclaimed a voice, shrill with extacy, " I come, Oh, my Waldemar, I come, even to thy grave."

Augusta, not to be retained by the efforts of the countess and Standen, burst open

open the door, and threw herself at lord Waldemar's feet.

" Ah, my Henry," cried she, " and are you come for me? --- I have long expected you! --- When the winds and the waves struggled against us, I looked for you, but you did not come!"

The words died on her lips, she fainted in the arms of her distracted husband, and Matilda, taking the advantage of her fit, prevailed on lord Waldemar to suffer her to be conveyed to a chamber, as quiet might restore her wandering senses. As she had predicted, Augusta recovered her breath and senses at the same time, and Matilda, after explaining as many things as it was necessary she should know, took every precaution for her being undisturbed, and flew to participate the joy that prevailed below,

As she was crossing the hall, another black figure alarmed her, but her terrors were

were quickly dissipated when she found this a nun of the Convent from which Augusta had flown. Matilda immediately guessed to whom they were indebted for the preservation of the beloved fugitive, and, leading the nun to the parlour, where all the friends were assembled, first introduced the countess, by her proper title, and explained the circumstances of which they had not heard.

"I have yet another friend to introduce," cried she, leading forward the nun, whose soft eyes beamed with self complacence at the sight of the happiness she had been instrumental in procuring.

After many effusions of gratitude from all parties, she was requested to give an account of the storms lady Waldemar and she must have weathered, since they left the Convent.

"It may be necessary to say," she began, "that, born of parents, who thought it good

good for my soul to be placed in a religious house, I entered St. Laure much against my inclination, and longed for nothing so much as a liberation from those ceremonies and restraints, that tired and disgusted me.

" One evening, observing the gate unfastened, that led to a walk in the wood, where only boarders were permitted to go, an irresistible impulse led me to try my fate, and venture to escape. I hesitated a moment, but my deliberation was only a cautious observance that no one was near me. I burst from the dreary walls with a palpitating heart, but turned sick with despair, when I observed a nun in the avenue before me. I resolved to excuse myself, by asking her whether she was going. She turned, and I beheld with joy it was the fair insane, who had, with another lady, entered as boarders, and who had taken the habit of the order.

" I am

" I am going to Ruthyne," cried she,
" and you shall go with me."

" Again I hesitated ;---what uneasiness I should give her companion, yet it was the only time for escape : I might assume her name, and elude the vigilance of the porters, by the innocent stratagem. I took her hand, and hurried on. Soon a porter met us, and enquired whither we were straying, at so late an hour ? I answered, " This is the lady Waldemar--her turn for rambling must be indulged." He nodded, and passed on, not distinguishing, in the dark, my face from that of miss Morvan.

" Other obstacles were soon overcome, and I had the happiness of finding myself free, in a small village, on the banks of the *Nonnette*. I was now determined to conduct lady Waldemar to her friends ; and, seizing on a lucid interval, as the means of obtaining necessary information, with

with a tolerable knowledge of the English tongue, had little difficulty in finding my way hither.

" When the chaise entered the avenue, lady Waldemar bade the postillion stop, and, regardless of my entreaties, alighted, telling me, we might follow her slowly, but on no account enter the Tower, till she sent for us. I was obliged to give way to her wish, and, soon after she had left us, a travelling coach, with several out riders, passed us. I now bade the man drive on, and, half distracted by my fears for lady Waldemar, rushed in, without ceremony, and, catching hold of a servant, asked him if he had seen her. Here I was informed of the tide of happiness that had rushed on her, and, unwilling to introduce myself to the whole party, I waited till I could see lady Matilda, who blesses me for my care of her sister, while I bless lady Waldemar, as the means of my escape from the walls of a Convent."

The

The charming nun ended with saying, her name was Manon de Larç, on which lord Waldemar arose, and, taking her hand, assured her, he would, from that hour, make her happiness one of his first cares.

When the hurry of different feelings was over, a cloud again stole Matilda's countenance, and her moments were painful, unless when she witnessed the sincere happiness that reigned in the bosoms of lord Waldemar and Augusta ; but her sensations were wound up to misery, when Seraphine, taking an opportunity, when they were alone, mentioned, that Aubincourt, the last time they met, had offered her his hand.

" Long years of sorrowful imprisonment," added the countess, " have not obliterated the idea of his merits, or generosity ; but, my Matilda, must not suppose that I am so weak, as to purchase happiness,

pines, at the expence of friendship.---No, my love," cried she, embracing her, " you are deserving of Aubincourt, and he alone is worthy of you.---I have sent to him, to bid him come, and take happiness at my hands,---you must not refuse me the pleasure of bestowing on him, the only prize, that can repay all my obligations."

Matilda could not speak.

" Believe me," cried the amiable countess, " love is for ever fled from my bosom.---I have been so long dead to the feelings of the world, that I shall never be tempted to enter that state, partaking so much of its cares.---The greatest felicity I can now experience, will be in the friendship of my remaining relations,---you, my dear Matilda, holding the first place in my heart."

The sober home-felt bliss, that Matilda
 felt,

felt, on being chearfully presented, by the countess, to Aubincourt, could only be equalled by the unfeigned gratitude, with which he received her ; and no sigh from the tranquil bosom of Seraphine, no cloud ever shading her beautiful features, checked their felicity, with the painful reflection of its being a sacrifice.

Augusta, by degrees, regained her health, and mixed with the family, which now was one of uninterrupted felicity and affection.

The countess, to whom the Tower did in right belong, made a present of it to Matilda, as a memorial of her affection, and gratitude ; and continued to reside with them after their marriage, till one of the magnificent seats of De Laffon, was prepared for her reception.

The party separated reluctantly, after a few weeks spent together, and Matilda, retained

retained the hope, that Marnonville could not remain insensible to the virtues of the charming miss Morvan.

The Tower no longer wore the appearance of frightful gloom, but of elegant and tranquil solitude, such as minds like those of Matilda and Aubincourt, might be supposed to render it; and often, while they strayed in the avenue by moon-light, memory brought back the days, when fear and gloom harassed their minds; when hardly a part of the striking fabric was viewed without horror, and when the east wing, (now repaired and new furnished, after the count Del Fiori's body had been removed to the chapel,) struck all with a shuddering, as the receptacle of some restless spirit.

The sweet idea, too, of their maternal friend, Mrs. Laurie, would steal over their minds, and sometimes draw a tear, but it was that of affection, rather than sorrow,

though sometimes prompted by the wish, that she could have lived to witness their felicity.

Thus, on an income by no means splendid, did they taste that happiness, the misguided lady Arthurine sought, and taught her son to seek, in vain, amidst scenes that dissipated their wealth, and destroyed their constitutions. Thus did the young earl die before he reached his majority, and the family estate devolved to Matilda and Augusta ; the latter of whom, now, like her sister, spent her time in the country, and became as exemplary a mother, as she was an amiable wife.

Lord Elmwar returned from Italy, and, for many years, added to the happiness of his brother, after which, he died, leaving him his title and wealth, which Aubincourt transmitted unsullied, and unimpaired, to his posterity.

The

The triumph of vice and villany was short, that of virtue and fortitude, endured for ages ; and, may it be remembered, that a principled firmness, while it enables us to repel the attacks of misfortune, entitles us to the glorious reward that awaits the virtuous.

